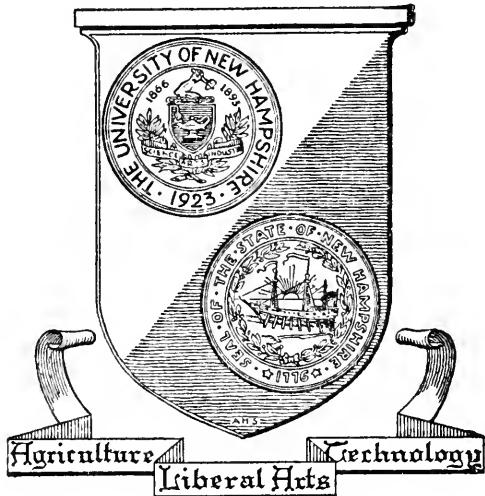


THE HEAVENLY GUEST

CELIA THAXTER

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CELIA THAXTER

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

WITH OTHER UNPUBLISHED WRITINGS

BY

CELIA THAXTER

With Reprints Of Essays By Friends And
Contemporaries.

EDITED BY

Her Brother, Oscar Laighton, From Material
In The Possession Of Her Granddaughter.



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PREFACE

I remember, long ago, Rev. James De Normandie gave a lecture on Celia Thaxter, in the Music Room at the Appledore House. The hall was crowded with the elite from the hotels at the Isles of Shoals.

Mr. De Normandie said: "Celia Thaxter stands alone pre-eminent, among the gifted singers of New England, for the charm and sweetness of her songs. We do not find that she belonged to any church, yet, through her verse there breathes the fragrance of a divine faith."

"She studied all that was fine in every Creed, finding something beautiful even in the Koran and teachings of Confucius."

I have thought, that in my sister's last days, she was leaning toward Unitarianism; being fond of Mr. De Normandie, she attended his church, when in Portsmouth, finding great interest in what that beloved gentleman said to his Congregation.

Many years ago Celia Thaxter wrote a poem adapted from one of the short stories of Count Tolstoy; she called it "The Heavenly Guest." To my delight, it has been found by her granddaughter, Rosamond Thaxter, in a portfolio which had been loaned to the late Sarah Orne Jewett, and which was returned after her death. With "The Heavenly Guest" were also found many unpublished manuscripts of Celia Thaxter's. The reader must remember that as Celia did not publish these poems she probably considered them unfinished, or below the standard of her best work.

It is near fifty years ago Celia wrote "The Heavenly Guest"; when she read the verse I was so moved by its

charm, its pathos and sweetness, I found my eyes wet with tears. I recall my sister's delight at my emotional criticism. This beautiful poem does not appear in her published work, and has only just come into the possession of her granddaughter, Rosamond Thaxter.

Celia was born in 1835, making this year the Centennial of her birth. With my niece, Rosamond, I have bound for greater safety, within the covers of this book, these last leaves of the writings of Celia Thaxter.

OSCAR LAIGHTON

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

The winter night shuts swiftly down. Within his little
humble room

Martin, the good old shoemaker, sits musing in the gathering
gloom.

His tiny lamp from off its hook he takes, and lights its
friendly beam,

Reaches for his beloved book and reads it by the flickering
gleam.

Long pores he o'er the sacred page. At last he lifts his
shaggy head.

"If unto me the Master came, how should I welcome
Him?" he said;

"Should I be like the Pharisee, with selfish thoughts filled
to the brim,

Or like the sorrowing sinner,—she who weeping ministered
to Him?"

He laid his head upon his arms, and while he thought,
upon him crept

Slumber so gentle and so soft he did not realize he slept.

"Martin!" he heard a low voice call. He started, looked
toward the door:

No one was there. He dozed again. "Martin!" he heard
it call once more.

"Martin, to-morrow I will come. Look out upon the street
for me."

He rose, and slowly rubbed his eyes, and gazed about him
drowsily.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

“I dreamed,” he said, and went to rest. Waking betimes
with morning light,
He wondered, “Were they but a dream, the words I seemed
to hear last night?”

Then, working by his window low, he watched the passers
to and fro.

Poor Stephen, feeble, bent and old, was shoveling away
the snow;

Martin at last laughed at himself for watching all so
eagerly.

“What fool am I! What look I for? Think I the Master’s
face to see?

“I must be going daft, indeed!” He turned him to his work
once more,

And stitched awhile, but presently found he was watching
as before.

Old Stephen leaned against the wall; weary and out of
breath was he.

“Come in, friend,” Martin cried, “come, rest, and warm
yourself, and have some tea.”

“May Christ reward you!” Stephen said, rejoicing in the
welcome heat;

“I was so tired!” “Sit,” Martin begged. “be comforted
and drink and eat.”

But even while his grateful guest refreshed his chilled and
toil-worn frame

Did Martin’s eyes still strive to scan each passing form
that went and came.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

“Are you expecting somebody?” old Stephen asked. And Martin told,
Though half ashamed, his last night’s dream. “Truly, I am not quite so bold
As to expect a thing like that,” he said, “yet, somehow, still I look!”
With that from off its shelf he took his worn and precious Holy Book.

“Yesterday I was reading here, how among simple folk
He walked
Of old, and taught them. Do you know about it? No?”
So then he talked
With joy to Stephen. “Jesus said, ‘The kind, the generous,
the poor,
Blessed are they, the humble souls, to be exalted evermore.’”

With tears of gladness in his eyes poor Stephen rose and went his way,
His soul and body comforted; and quietly passed on the day,
Till Martin from his window saw a woman shivering in the cold,
Trying to shield her little babe with her thin garment worn and old.

He called her in and fed her, too, and while she ate he did his best
To make the tiny baby smile, that she might have a little rest;

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

“Now may Christ bless you, sir!” she cried, when warmed
and cheered she would have gone;
He took his old cloak from the wall. “ ’Twill keep the
cold out. Put it on.”

She wept. “Christ led you to look out and pity wretched
me,” said she.

Martin replied, “Indeed He did!” and told his story
earnestly,

How the low voice said, “I will come,” and he had
watched the livelong day.

“All things are possible,” she said, and then she, also, went
her way.

Once more he sat him down to work, and on the passers-by
to look,

Till the night fell, and then again he lit his lamp and took
his book.

Another happy hour was spent, when all at once he seemed
to hear

A rustling sound behind his chair; he listened, without
thought of fear.

He peered about. Did something move in yonder corner
dim and dark?

Was that a voice that spoke his name? “Did you not
know me, Martin?” “Hark!

Who spoke?” cried Martin. “It is I,” replied the Voice,
and Stephen stepped

Forth from the dusk and smiled at him, and Martin’s
heart within him leapt!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

Then like a cloud was Stephen gone, and once again did
Martin hear
That heavenly Voice. "And this is I." sounded in tones
divinely clear.
From out the darkness softly came the woman with the
little child,
Gazing at him with gentle eyes, and, as she vanished,
sweetly smiled.

Then Martin thrilled with solemn joy. Upon the sacred
page read he:
"Hungry was I, ye gave me meat; thirsty, and ye gave drink
to me;
A stranger I, ye took me in, and as unto the lowliest one
Of these my brethren, even the least, ye did it, unto Me
'twas done."

And Martin understood at last it was no vision born of
sleep,
And all his soul in prayer and praise filled with a rapture
still and deep.
He had not been deceived. it was no fancy of the twilight
dim,
But glorious truth! The Master came. and he had minis-
tered to Him.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

THE PREACHER MAN

O the sun is bright and the day is fair,
And the sweet breeze wanders everywhere,
And the sweet birds sing as they lightly fly,
And I wish we could join them, Madge and I.

We are bidden to listen and so we do,
Shut up in the narrow and stuffy pew,
Behaving just as well as we can,
We look over there at the preacher man.

I can't understand, though I take such pains ;
All sense seems gone from our little brains,
So we just sit quiet as best we may,
And wait till the long hour wears away.

My poor little sister tried to keep
Her blue eyes wide, but she fell asleep,
"Tis so close and stupid and dull and warm,
And I hold her safe in my tired arm.

But what in the world he is talking about
We do not know, and we can't find out.
O how can he have so much to say,
The preacher man, such a lovely day?

SHIPWRECK

From the piled ridge of this deserted shore,
See how wild morning-glory vines have grown,
Till like a light green, gentle tide they pour
Down the long slope of broken, wave-smoothed stone!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

How the bare beach is clothed as with a cool
And graceful garment, where beyond the reach
Of waves that softly break, as white as wool,
Lies scattered driftwood which the hot suns bleach.

Green leaves and rosy bloom all undisturbed
By wind or wave, safe in the summer calm;
The fury of the ocean stayed and curbed,
The mad gales hushed and breathing only balm.

Silence and peace: but all the ledge is strown
With splintered timbers whitening in the sun.
Four months ago a mighty ship was thrown
Here at our feet—her crew all drowned save one.

The breakers tossed her like a baby's toy,
Rolled her and crushed her, broke her hull in twain,
Snapped her tall masts of oak, and to destroy
All trace of her existence e'en were fain.

Her great sails beaten into shapeless rags,
Her huge hull but a heap of bristling beams,
Her dead crew scattered among reefs and crags,
Where yonder white gull floating wheels and screams.

She lay, a chaos, while the howling sea
Plucked at the fragments, and the hurricane
Roared at the ruin still, and sullenly
The tempest spent its useless wrath insane.

Look at the flowers! what lavish, delicate
And glowing beauty! See this rosy bell,
This chalice of tranquillity, where late
The shattered timbers of the great ship fell.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

How fair, how sweet, how tender and divine
This glory of the morning, still and pure!
What meant that cruel wrath? Heaven makes no sign:
Humanity must patiently endure.

For death replies with silence worse than pain
To all man's pleading. Pluck the perfect flower,
Grateful for peace while peace may yet remain;
Terror and misery will claim their hour.

And fruitless prayers pierce heaven from trusting souls,
Trampled defenceless the wild waves beneath,
O'er many a grave yon low, bright billow rolls,
While from the flower grace, joy and beauty breathe.

MY FRIEND

O Fortune, thou whose potent hand doth hold
All gifts, unlocking with thy mystic keys
Love, fame, wealth, powers and pleasures manifold,—
Bring to my friend the olive boughs of peace!

For in this storm-tossed world what shall avail
Thy largess of the glittering shows of life?
Some day is sure to see their splendors fail,
Dimmed by earth's dreary clouds of pain and strife.

But the tranquillity of soul that grows
From holy living and a conscience clean,
Sweeter than fragrance of the new-blown rose,
Clearer than stainless heights of heaven serene:—

O Fortune, with that blessing crown my friend,
With that divine content, that golden ease
The pure in heart alone may comprehend:—
So bring my friend the olive-boughs of peace!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

SONG

Lift up thy light, O Soul, arise and shine!
Steadfast though all the storms of life assail,
Immortal spark of the great Light Divine!
Against whose power no tempest shall prevail—

Hold high thy light above earth's restless tides,
Scatter thy messages of light afar!
Falsehood and folly pass, but truth abides,
Be thine the splendor of her deathless star—

When the world sins and sorrows round thee rave
Pierce thou the darkness with thy dauntless ray,
Send out thy happy beams to help and save
“More and more shining to the perfect day.”

SANTA

O dear, mysterious Santa Claus,
The best and kindest that ever was,
Are you up there in the thin blue smoke?
Was that the wind or your voice that spoke?

I thought of your coming the whole year through.
Are there some children who know not you?
Who are hungry and sad in the cold and snow?
Oh find them out, for you surely know.

On the warm stone I kneel and pray:
Give them a merry Christmas day.
Bless great and small and let no one grieve;
Remember us all this Christmas Eve.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

CROWNED

The last gold lily in the garden blows,
The long, sweet days pause at their greatest length,
The air is rich with odors of the rose,
And summer's heat begins to gather strength.

Flushes the pink dawn over silver seas,
The idle sail lies lapped in dreamful calm,
And waits, for in the south the wandering breeze
Lingering, is loth to leave the slender palm.

Soars the white gull in splendor through the sky
With dazzling pinions lost in azure air,
Sleep the light clouds all motionless on high,
Or on the far sea line in islets fair

The honeysuckle chalices outpour
Delicious perfumes on the dewy night,
The rosy winged sphinx wheels hovering o'er
The many clustered phloxes, glimmering white.

Sinks the red moon, a crescent low and large,
Scattering its broken rubies on the tide,
Low whispers breathe along the ocean marge,
As if in heaven some happy spirit sighed.

Beyond the beauty of the ripening year,
Thrilling with deep enchantment sense and soul,
A hint of higher rapture still I hear,
Of wonder sent to glorify the whole.

Lo,—Thou! The soft airs sing thee! To my heart
The day and night but change to bring thee near!
The central spark of every joy thou art,
The essence of all things divine and dear.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

Thy blush is in the dawn, thy tender tones
In every gentle sound upon the air,
Shadows to me are the world's crowns and thrones,
For the king's purple by thy gift I wear.

TO YOUTH

Take heed, O Youth, both brave and bright,
Battles there are for you to fight!
Stand erect and face them all,
Nor turn and flee, nor wavering fall:
Of all the world's bewildering gifts
Take only what the soul uplifts.
Keep firm your hand upon the helm
Lest bitter tempests overwhelm.
And watch lest evil mists should mar,
The splendor of your morning star.
And robe the glory of the day
You have not reached, in sullen gray—
Choose them, O Youth, both bright and brave!
Wilt be a monarch or a slave?
Ah! scorn to take one step below
The paths where Truth and Honor go!
On manhood's threshold stand a king,
Demanding all that life can bring,
Of lofty thought, of purpose high,
Of beauty and nobility,
Once master of yourself, no fate
Can make your rich world desolate.
And all men shall look up to see
The glory of your victory.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

THE LESSON

Her gown is as white as the light sea spray,
The pretty Pauline, on this summer day,
Like the rainbows that melt at the edge of the surf
The flower foam breaks on the emerald turf.

A sea of blossoms,—how sweet, how fair!
What tempered sunshine, what fragrant air!
Where the butterfly and the banded bee
And the singing birds float merrily,

To learn her task she has brought her book,
But 'tis hard on the printed page to look,
And flowers, bees, butterflies, breeze and birds
Steal the meaning away from the weighty words.

Keep wise book lore for the time indoors
Where no sights arrest and no sound allures,
Let your soul listen, O sweet Pauline,
And learn what the golden hour may mean!

THE SANDPIPER'S HAPPY CALL

The sky is like ashes of roses, the few shy stars are white,
On the horizon the delicate haze sleeps soft in the dying
light.

The bell on the buoy rings faintly with the ocean's rise
and fall.

And sweet through the warm May twilight comes the sand-
piper's happy call.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

The touch of the breeze is like a caress, the sound of the sea like a dream,
Like a dream the past and present melt, all things unreal seem;
All the years of our lives as we sail through space on the earth's huge spinning ball,
But sweet, oh sweet through the twilight comes the sand-piper's tender call.

O friends, oh dear companions, who made life so rich and bright,
In what world are you hidden afar from my longing sight?
Empty and cold are your places, I miss you one and all,
As sweet through the dewy dusk again trembles the sand-piper's call.

The summer is clothing herself once more in her green and rose and gold,
In all her splendors of color and perfumed airs as of old,
And a thousand wistful memories her sights and her sounds recall
As sweet through the listening twilight comes the sand-piper's happy call.

Lo, mystery lies behind us and mystery lies before,
But thou dost not mock us, Heavenly Power, Thou wilt our lost restore:
Thou bringest again the summer and Thy promise of hope for all
Sounds sweet and sure as I hear once more the sandpiper's happy call.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

A SAD OLD STORY

The summer wind was rustling in the elm-trees,
The summer flowers were blossoming below;
Two stood together in the little garden,
Touched softly by the sunset's fading glow.

The voice of one rose sweet, and young, and eager,
Strong, full of hope and courage, firm and glad,
The other answered thrilling through the twilight,
Broken and tender, faltering and sad.

"Mother," he said, "wherever I am drifting
The wide world over, I shall think of you,
And I'll come back to you, O never doubt it!
So proudly sailing o'er the sparkling blue."

His bright head, with its locks of sunny beauty,
One little moment on her breast doth lie!
The next a cry goes through the balmy darkness,
"Goodbye, my darling! O my boy, goodbye!"

A winter morning on the fierce Atlantic,
And like a beast of prey the wild wind soars;
Rushing before it reins the raging ocean
To fling its flakes of ice on all the shores.

A wreck is heaving slowly on the billows,
Torn by the hungry ledge's cruel teeth;
The red sun rises slow through stinging vapor,
And flares across the waves that kiss and seethe.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

Swinging head downward from the tangled rigging
Flung o'er the stern, his bright hair in the brine
Washing forlornly, hangs the cherished darling.
Stark, frozen, with wide eyes that make no sign.

She sits and waits for him with love and longing,
She breathes his name with tender tears and prayers,
The while like tigers fierce the breakers toss him.
And in his face the mocking sunshine stares.

CHRISTMAS MORN

Amid the rigor of the ice and snow
The happy season's thoughts glow bright and warm.
Roses of gladness and of beauty blow
In the white track of the wild, wintry storm.

Our grateful thoughts with prayer and psalm we raise
In unison with clear Christmas chime,
Sweet human love and reverence and praise
Make precious and divine the sacred time.

Close to the dim church portal whence emerge
The worshippers, I comb a scattered crowd,
A robin perches at the footpath's verge,
Sends up his song and carols long and loud.

What thrills thy heart, thou ruddy-breasted bird,
Warbling undaunted on the frosty bough?
Hast thou perhaps the happy tidings heard,
And for our joy so blithely singest thou?

Well mayest thou send up thy delicious voice,
And join our jubilee this Christmas morn!
With all things give thanks; thou mayest rejoice,
For on this day the world's great Hope was born.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

MAIZE

For the Nation's Emblem

Upon a hundred thousand plains
Its banners rustle in the breeze,
O'er all the nations' wide domains,
From coast to coast betwixt the seas.

It storms the hills and fills the vales,
It marches like an army grand,
The continent its presence hails,
Its beauty brightens all the land.

Far back through history's shadowy page
It shines, a power of boundless good,
The people's prop from age to age,
The one unfailing wealth of food,

God's gift to the New World's great need,
That helped to build the nation's strength,
Up through beginnings rude to lead
A higher race of men at length.

How straight and tall and stately stand
Its serried stalks upright and strong!
How nobly are its outlines planned,
What grace and charm to it belong!

What splendid curves in rustling leaves!
What richness in its close-set gold!
What largess in its clustered sheaves
New every year, though ages old!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

America, from thy broad breast
It sprang, beneficent and bright,
Of all thy gifts from heaven the best,
For the world's succor and delight.

Then do it honor, give it praise!
A noble emblem should be ours;
Upon thy fair shield set thy maize,
More glorious than a myriad flowers.

And let thy States their garland bring.
Each its own lovely blossom sign
But leading all, let Maize be king,
Holding its place by right divine.

SONNET

O were I loved as I desire to be!
What is there in the great sphere of the earth
Or range of evil between death and birth
That I should fear, if I were loved by thee?
All the inner, all the outer world of pain
Clear love would pierce and cleave, if thou wast mine;
As I have heard that somewhere in the main
Fresh water springs come up through bitter brine,
'Twere joy, not fear, clasped hand in hand with thee
To wait for death,—mute, careless of all ills
Apart upon a mountain, tho' the surge
Of some new deluge from a thousand hills
Flung leagues of roaring foam into the gorge
Below us, as far as eye could see!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

AN IDYL

By cottage walls the lilacs blow:
Rich spikes of perfume stand and sway
At open casements, where all day
The warm wind waves them to and fro.

Out of the shadow of the door,
Into the golden morning air,
Comes one who makes the day more fair
And summer sweeter than before.

The apple blossoms might have shed
Upon her cheek the bloom so rare;
The sun has kissed her bright brown hair,
Braided about her graceful head.

Lightly betwixt the lilacs tall
She passes,—through the garden gate,—
Across the road,—and stays to wait
A moment by the orchard wall,

And then in gracious light and shade,
Beneath the blossom-laden trees,
'Mid song of birds and hum of bees
She strays, unconscious, unafeard.

Till swiftly o'er the grassy space
Comes one whose step she fain would stay;
Glad as the newly-risen day
He stoops to read her drooping face.

Her face is like the morning skies,
Bright, timid, tender, blushing sweet;
She dares not trust her own to meet
The steady splendor of his eyes.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

He holds her with resistless charm,
With truth, with power, with beauty crowned;
About her slender waist is wound
The strong, safe girdle of his arm:

And up and down, in shade and light,
They wander through the flying hours.
And all the way is strown with flowers.
And life looks like one long delight.

Ah happy twain—no frost shall harm,
No change shall reach your bliss so long
As keeps its place the faithful, strong,
Safe girdle of that folding arm.

Could you this simple secret know,
No death in life would be to fear
Ere in another fleeting year
By cottage walls the lilacs blow.

ALOFT

Pleasant and peaceful all—most sweet
When morning and when evening fires
Silent above the busy street
Touch the dove-haunted roofs and spires.

Neighbored by sparrow and by dove,
A comrade of the weather-cocks,
Here is the quiet perch I love,
The chimney stacks, the city clocks:—

And thank the heavens that bend above
For leave to find such deep delight,
In tower and spire and fluttering dove,
Color and cloud and sparrow's flight!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

THE FOG BELL

In the thick mist that shrouded land and sea,
I heard the warning fog-bell tolling slow,
And its dull clangor only seemed to me
A deeper gloom across the world to throw.

Most like a signal of despair and dread,
With vague uneasiness it filled the air,
Its harsh voice like a dirge rung for the dead,
Seemed heavy with a weight of woe and care.

“Ah, cease thy weary jar, discordant bell,”
I prayed in silence, “vex my ear no more!”
And as I prayed, a hollow murmur fell
Upon my sense from the wave-beaten shore.

The roar of breakers! And I grew aware
That it was life and hope, not death that spoke,
No sullen booming tidings of despair,
But help and cheer the dangerous silence broke.

“Turn, turn your prows and seek the open sea!”
To wandering ships incessantly it cried,
“Here lurks the cruel ledge to wreck you! Flee
While yet you may, across the waters wide.”

‘Tis like the voice of Age, I thought, which speaks
To careless Youth that dares life’s leaping wave,
Till tempest-tossed and mocked by mists, he seeks
The knowledge that alone shall guide and save.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

THE PATH OF PEACE

It is so hard to walk earth's toilsome way
Ever while slow moons wane, or slow increase,
So hard to follow Duty day by day
Leading to God's peace!

O weary grows the heart and worn the feet.
In the dull round of uneventful cares,
Yet there's a thought might make our service sweet,
Since God our toil prepares.

Lift up thy tired eyes! No cloud is spread
Betwixt thee and His heaven serene and pure.
He holds His hand above thy humble head.
Thy happiness is sure.

Then keep the courage of thy morning prime
And bravely bear the cross He lays on thee,
'Tis but a little space of troubled time
In His eternity.

Remember, only in this pathway lies
Thy safety,—once beyond its sheltering bound.
What choking mists, what bitter tempests rise
Where never rest is found!

Hard may be Duty's hand, but lo! it leads
Out into perfect joy where pain shall cease.
God sees thy striving and thy patience heeds,
And thou shalt find His peace.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

PROMISES

O breathing wind of Spring!
Full toned, at every door and window striving,
What memories thou dost bring!
How Youth felt at thy touch fresh hopes arriving.

Then when thy voice did seem
To prophesy for us of rapture distant,
Half heard as in a dream,
Vague, fascinating, sweet, with sound persistent.

So full of joy that tone!
No good thing in our future should be wanting;
From some fair region blown
Came promises of dim delight enchanting.

What says thy voice today,
O wind of Spring against the casement striving,
Waving the dry vine spray,
Greeting the bare brown earth with touch reviving?

What sayest thou to Age,
Who spoke to Youth with such exceeding sweetness?
Turn thou the Past's dull page,
With all its record of life's incompleteness;

Make ready for release,
When unencumbered by earth's weight and sorrow,
Thou shalt in power and peace
Begin again with some clear, glad tomorrow!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

THE UNLUCKY NUMBER

Out on a ledge in the bright blue sea
Lay thirteen seals and basked in the sun,
Below swam the little fish merrily,
And the seals were breakfasting, every one.

Ah, how warm was the sun, and bright!
Softly the breakers whispering rolled,
Over their heads sailed the sea gulls white,
And the seaweeds swayed in the water cold.

There crept a gunner across the wave,
Silently rowing his slender boat,
He gazed at the company sleek and brave,
While the gulls above shrieked a warning note.

A puff of vanishing smoke,—a flash,
A sound that rang till the welkin roared!
Down slipped the company, splash, splash, splash!
And far in the distance the white gulls soared.

Alas, on the heaving brine uprose
One shining form again to the light,
One seal had fled to his last repose,
And floating lay in a piteous plight.

“Well,” said the gunner, stooping to draw
The limp amphibian on board,
“You’re as fine a fellow as ever I saw,
But an ancient saying you have ignored.

You made thirteen at your table, friend!
But it wasn’t possible you should know
How the wicked Judas came to his end,
And cursed the number long years ago.”

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

COTTON

I looked abroad from the rocky height to the vast round
ring of the world;
A throng of vessels on the sea their white sails had un-
furled,
With wide wings glittering in the light, east, west, north,
south, they flew;
The breeze sent each upon its way across the level blue.
Musing, I marked their beauty, and thought of their varied
use,
From the sprit-sailed fishers' little voyage to the whalers'
Arctic cruise,
From the patient coasters' canvas to the mighty column of
white
That clothes the great ship proudly to the top of her stately
height.
Four-masted schooners ponderous with acres of sailcloth
stout,
Great fans of yachts spread out to catch all airs that stir
about:
Such press of sail from stem to stern, from deck to top-
mast tall.
They skyward yearn and hardly seem to touch the earth at
all.
The lateen sails of Southern Seas, curved like the pinions
light
Of soaring gulls, and then the folds of raiment glowing
bright
With which fair Venice drapes her masts, with colors rich
and deep,
To woo soft Adriatic airs that in the stillness sleep.
And it seemed a wonderful thing to me that all the count-
less sails

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

Should spring from out of the dusty earth, that the cotton
plant should grow,
Blossoming golden o'er myriad fields, to scatter its filmy
snow
From the ripened seed in a dazzling cloud, to be gathered
and woven and spun
For the use of man in every one of the nations under the
sun.
And I thought, as I gazed at the gleaming sails, there is
nothing large or small;
The poppy seed I can hardly see is as great as the earth's
huge ball.
For the spirit of God is in every thing, and the life of all
is one,
From the wing of the gnat and the breath of the rose to
the central fires of the sun.

WHITTIER

Fame lays her golden trumpet to her lips
And breathes a name the world perforce must hear.
“Listen,” she whispers in its drowsy ear,
“Here is a light shall suffer no eclipse;
A crescent with its glory just begun,
A spark from the great central fire sublime,
A crescent that shall orb into a sun
And burn in splendor through the mists of Time!
For I will set it, glittering clear, among
The galaxy of great names hung on high
Like steadfast stars upon the midnight sky,
To hold its place amid the dazzling throng,
Dauntless and deathless on the heavenly height,
For all men's homage, wonder, and delight.”

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

SONNET

If God speaks anywhere in any voice
To us, his children, surely here and now
We hear him, while the great chords seem to bow
Our heads, and all the symphony's breathless noise
Breaks over us with challenge to our souls!
Beethoven's music! From the mountain peaks
The strong, divine, compelling thunder rolls,
And "Come up higher, come!" the music speaks,
"Out of your darkest valleys of despair
Behold I lift you up on mighty wings
Into Hope's living, reconciling air—
Breathe and forget your life's perpetual stings,
Dream,—folded on the breast of patience sweet,
Some glimpse of pitying love for you may beat!"

ON THE BEACH

The slow, cool, emerald breakers cruising clear
Along the sparkling edge of level sand,
Shatters its crystal arch, and far and near
Its broken splendor spills upon the land.
With rush and whisper, siren sweet and soft
Gently salutes the children of the earth,
And catches every sunbeam from aloft,
Flashes it back in summer mood of mirth:
And with its flood of strong refreshment pours
Health and delight along the sounding shores.

Amid its frolic foam and scattered spray
Tossed lightly, like some dreaming lion's mane,
The tired dwellers of the city play.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

Forgetful for a while of care and pain,
While peace broods over all, nor does it seem
As if the sleeping lion could awake;
And yet, when past is this sweet summer dream,
What roar of thunder on the coast will break
When winter's tempests rage in sullen wrath,
Death and disaster in their cruel path,
And hurl against the sandy margin gray
Devouring fury, tumult and dismay!

THE HEAVENLY MESSAGE

Beneath the cold, pale, softly sleeping snows
That load the crowded roofs and touch the spires,
With Christmas cheer the city's great heart glows,
And on its hearthstones dance the Christmas fires.

High over head on airy wings of light,
Like some white dove loosed from heaven's golden bars
God's messenger of love in splendor bright
Floats under the keen, frosty, sparkling stars.

"Rejoice!" she sings—"Christ lives, O sons of men!"
'Tis joy makes sweet the midnight's solemn chime,
While centuries pass and each swift year again
Brings in the dear and unforgotten time.

Rejoice—remembering Him! But not alone
With feast and music;—unto them that need
Give of your cheer,—so let His love be shown
So shall your Christmas time be blest indeed.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

THE TROLL AND THIS LAKE

A Scandinavian Legend

The little old Troll on the hillside sat,
And he cried, as he stamped his foot and frowned,
And twisted his body this way and that,
“I would that the church bells all were drowned.”

For up in the village of Kund there rang
On the morning air a mellow chime,
But he stopped his ears at the silver clang,
And cursed the sound for the hundredth time.

“Over to Funen I’ll go,” he said,
“These pious folk are too much for me!”
So away from the village of Kund he fled,
“For I must have quiet and peace,” quoth he.

In Funen no church bells vexed his soul,
But ever for Kund did he fret and long,
And ever a mischief wrought in the Troll
To wreak on its people some deadly wrong.

A peasant to Funen came one day,
From peasant Kund, the Troll so grim
In the guise of a Christian stood in his way,
“And where do you come from?” he questioned him.

The good man answered, “From Kund I come.”
“From Kund!” said the Troll, “well, will you take
This letter with you when you go home?
But mind that the seal you do not break.

And when you get to the churchyard wall,
Just toss it over and let it be,
Wherever the letter may chance to fall
The owner will come for it presently.”

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

“Why, yes!” said the peasant, “that I’ll do.”

Then into his pocket the wicked sprite
The letter thrust, and “Good day to you,
And thanks,” said the Troll, and was out of sight,

And out of mind! For the man forgot
Both the Troll and his message speedily,
The way was long and the day was hot,
And into Zealand back came he.

Weary he grew of the dust and heat,
So down by a meadow great and wide
He sat, to rest, while the birds sang sweet,
And the wild flowers blossomed on every side.

Then suddenly into his stupid head
The thought of the letter flashed, “I’ll look
At the paper, ’twill do no harm.” he said,
And slow from his pocket the missive took.

He held it and turned it before his eyes
This way and that, till out of the seal
He saw with a dumb and dazed surprise
A drop of water begin to steal.

Then while he stared in a mute amaze,
Another and still another oozed.
Then quick as lightning beneath his gaze
The letter opened and straightway loosed

A rushing flood on the meadows green,
Scarcely the peasant had time to flee:
It was a rush for life! Where the grass had been
Sparkled the sheen of a silver sea!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

For into the letter the wicked Troll,
A whole wide lake he had shut and sealed
To send to Kund, that its water might roll
Over the church and the bell that pealed!

But still the bell in the steeple swings
In pleasant Kund to this very day.
And still from the spire it sweetly rings
To call the people to praise and pray.

And the Kund folk undisturbed thank God
That the Troll his purpose could not fill,
And as for the lake, Tiis lake and broad,
It lies over the meadow sparkling still.

SONG

O delicate west wind blowing
Soft over the flowery land,
Till thick sweet blossoms are snowing
O'er earth at the touch of thy hand;

Go find my love where she lingers
'Mid fragrant orchard shades;
Clasp gently her warm white fingers,
And ruffle her golden braids.

Her beauty to all beholders
Makes summer more rich and bright;
The kerchief over her shoulders
Like any blossom is white.

O what is the day without her!
Unmeaning its splendor grows.
O west wind, whisper about her
My name like the breath of a rose!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

THE CHILD AND THE YEAR

Said the Child to the youthful Year,
What hast thou in store for me,
Oh giver of beautiful gifts, what cheer,
What joy dost thou bring with thee?

And the Year in the eyes of the child
Looked, bright with the sparkle of frost,
And gazing, sighed, and sighing, smiled,
Like shadow and sunshine crossed.

All gifts of my seasons four,
The winter's snow-locked bliss,
The flowers of spring and the autumn's store,
And the summer's golden kiss;

All these and more shall be thine,
Dear Child, but the last and best
Thyself must earn by a strife divine,
Wouldst thou be truly blest.

Wouldst know this last best gift?
'Tis a conscience clear and bright,
A peace of mind which the soul can lift
To an infinite delight!

Truth, patience, courage and love
If thou unto me canst bring,
I will set all earth's ills above,
Oh Child, and crown thee a king.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

MARGARET

Softly sweeps the April storm,
Floods of rain and breezes warm,
Drowsy flowers at last are waking,
Through the dark earth gently breaking;
Though they have not blossomed yet,
Here to seek them through the wet
Merrily comes Margaret.

Nothing reck she of the flood,
Nothing finds she, flower or bud,
But she seems herself a flower,
In the tumult of the shower;
While across the field she trips
O'er bright eyes and ruddy lips
Fast the sparkling water slips,

Gay and daring little witch!
How the color, deep and rich,
Mantles in her cheek's sweet curve!
Mark the pretty mouth's reserve,—
Ah, but smiles are hidden there!
Like a torch her golden hair
Flares above her forehead fair.

Slender shape of pliant grace
Crowned with such a lovely face!
Not a single flower is out,
But that's naught to mourn about,
She the loveliest blossom is,
All abloom with light and bliss
For the sun and rain to kiss!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

YULE LOG

Come gather round the Yule log's blaze!

In light and laughter leap the flames,
The fire sings like a hymn of praise,
Its warmth the heart of winter tames.

Behold the house is all aglow

From door to roof with Christmas cheer!
What matter how the cold winds blow!
Comfort and peace and joy are here.

Come share the Yule log's glorious heat!

For many a year the grand old tree
Stood garnering up the sunshine sweet,
To keep for our festivity.

And now our Christmas Eve to bless

See how it yields its ardent rays!
As if to wish you happiness,
Honor and love and length of days.

“Welcome,” it smiles with every beam,

Saluting you with kindly power.
Its golden banners flash and gleam,
Its mellow splendor crowns the hour.

Then gather round the flames so bright,

Forget that winter blasts are stern,
So fervently this holy night
On friendships' hearth the Yule fires burn.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

A THOUGHT OF SPRING

With the whirling and drifting of snows
Comes breathless the wild New Year,
While bitter the North wind blows
O'er the fields that lie stark and drear.

Yet Hope is alight in her eyes
As she looks from the heart of the storm,
“Earth sleeps in her shroud,” she cries,
But the life in her breast is warm.

Death is but a dream of the night,
And the hymn of joy is begun,
For slowly seeking the light
The great globe turns to the sun.

Behold, I will bring delight
In place of the darkness and cold;
Safe under the meadows so white
Is hiding the buttercup gold.

The blush of the sweet-briar rose,—
Where is it treasured today?
I will call it from under the snows
To bloom on its delicate spray.

I will fling all the flowers abroad;
And loose in the echoing sky
The beautiful birds of God
To carol their rapture on high.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

And the summer's splendor shall reign
In place of the winter's dearth,
Her color and music again
Shall gladden the patient earth.

Look but with eyes that are pure
On the gifts in my hand that lie.
And your portion of bliss is sure.
In beauty no wealth can buy.

Hark to the New Year's voice,
Through the murk of the winter drear;
O children of men, rejoice,
At the tidings of hope and cheer.

TO J. APPLETON BROWN

Poet, whose golden songs in silence sung
Thrill from the canvas to the hearts of men,
Sweet harmonies that speak without a tongue.
Melodious numbers writ without a pen,
The great gods gifted thee, and hold thee dear,
Placed in thy hand the torch which genius lit,
Touched thee with genial sunshine and good cheer,
And swift heat-lightnings of a charming wit
Whose shafts are ever harmless, though so bright:—
Gave thee of all life's blessings this, the best,
The love of all thy kind, for thy delight—
So be thou happy, Poet-painter, blest,
Whose gentle eyes look out, all unaware,
Beneath the brow of Keats, soft-crowned with shadowy
hair.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

BACK AGAIN

The chill snows lingered, the spring was late,
It seemed a weariful while to wait
For warmth and fragrance and song and flowers,
And balmy airs and delicious showers.

But we bided our time and with patient eyes
We watched the slowly relenting skies.
Till at last one April morning we woke
To find we were free of the winter's yoke.

And a rush of wings through the rushing rain
Told us the birds were back again ;
A joyous tumult we heard aloft,
Clear rippling music and fluttering soft :

So light of heart and so light of wing,
All hope of summer, delight of spring
They seemed to utter with voices sweet.
Upborne on their airy pinions fleet.

Dainty, delicate, lovely things !
Would that my thoughts, like you, had wings,
To match your grace, your charm, your cheer.
Your fine melodious atmosphere !

Precious and beautiful gifts of God.
Scattered thro' heaven and earth abroad.
Who, ungrateful, would do you wrong,
Check your flight and your golden song ?

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

O friendly spirits, O sweet, sweet birds!
Would I could put my welcome in words
Fit for such singers as you to hear.
Sky born minstrels and poets dear!

EVEN THOU

“A little child shall lead them.” Even Thou.
O Christ adored! Behold the lowly place
Where the star-beckoned shepherds came to bow
Before the glory of His infant face!

Ah happy Mary! at thy breast, so near
To hold the world’s great hope, heaven’s holy king!
Ah happy shepherds, chosen first to hear
The tidings beautiful that angels sing!

The humble and the poor He came to teach.
The sinful and the suffering He would save,
No human soul can sink beyond His reach:
He rescues all, for all His life He gave.

“Let not your hearts be troubled,”—Hear His voice!
“Keep my commandments and be loved of me!”
O lift your heavy hearts up and rejoice.
“I will not leave you comfortless,” saith He.

Divine compassion, sent to help us all!
Infinite mercy, love that knows no end!
Thou who art never deaf to sorrow’s call,
Make light our darkness, oh Thou Heavenly Friend!

He breaks the bonds of death, He sets us free,
Obey Him! there can be no joy so sweet!
His hand He stretches forth to you and me,—
Yea, lead us, Lord, and bring us to Thy feet!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

THE CROWN OF THE YEAR

In sapphire, emerald, amethyst,
Sparkles the sea by the morning kissed;
And the mists from the far-off valleys lie
Gleaming like pearl in the tender sky;
Soft shapes of cloud that melt and drift,
With tints of opal that glow and shift.

For the strong wind blows from the warm southwest
And ruffles the snow on the white gull's breast—
Fills all the sails till the boats careen;
Low over the crested waves they lean,
Driven to leeward, dashed with spray,
Or beating up through the beautiful bay.

Ah, happy morning of autumn sweet,
Yet ripe and rich with the summer's heat!
By the ruined wall on the rocky height,
In shadow I gaze at the changing light,
Splendor of color that clothes thee round,
Huge orb of the earth to its utmost bound.

Near me each humble flower and weed,—
The dock's rich umber, gone to seed,
The hawkbit's gold, the bayberry's spice,
One late wild rose beyond all price;
Each is a friend and all are dear,
Pathetic signs of the waning year.

The painted rose haws, how they glow!
Like crimson wine the woodbines show.
The wholesome yarrow's clusters fine
Like frosted silver dimly shine;
And who thy quaintest charm shall tell.
Thou little scarlet pimpernel?

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

The jeweled sea and the deeps of the air,
All heaven and earth are good and fair,
Ferns at my feet and the mullein's spike,
And the soaring gull I love alike;
With the schooner's grace as she leans to the tide
The soul within me is satisfied.

In the mellow, golden autumn days
When the world is zoned in their purple haze,
A spirit of beauty walks abroad
That fills the heart with peace of God;
The spring and summer may bless and cheer,
But autumn brings us the crown o' the year.

HEAVENLY HEIGHTS

O happy, holy Easter morn!
What promise lights thy radiant sky!
Earth hails again her hope new-born,
And death is lost in victory.

From heavenly heights a glory streams,
Backward the mists of doubt are hurled,
Sorrow and sin are baseless dreams:
A morning freshness holds the world.

O promise sweet! O lovely light!
O life that shall begin again,
As spotless as the lilies white,
Perfect and fair, without a stain!

Look up to Him whose love is sure,
And with the new day's blossoming
Become as little children pure,
In God's divine, immortal Spring.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

IN FREDERICKSBURG

In Fredericksburg, when all the troubled town
With war's dread signs and wounded men was filled,
And death among the crowd moved up and down,
And many a soldier's torture touched and stilled,

One, on whose heart such love and pity weighed
For those brave men as could not be expressed,
Where the South's rich red roses stood arrayed
In lavish beauty, made his tender quest.

And gathering wealth of blossoms, sought the rooms
Where vainly feverish anguish wooed repose,
Passed soft from couch to couch with those fair blooms
And upon every pillow laid a rose.

They lifted up their saddened, grateful eyes
And blessed him with a look, who could not speak:
Some murmured thanks who never more might rise,
And begged him lay it nearer lip and cheek.

The sweet red rose, that they might feel its breath,
Filling the gloom and silence chill and drear,
And in the presence dread of pain and death,
Yet knew that dear familiar beauty near.

And so he passed, and left along his way
Feeling that baffles thought and tongue and pen,
A flutter of pathetic joy, a ray
From the near heaven on those devoted men.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

Deep down and close to the heart's fount of tears,
Sweet among sweetest things this memory lies;
He shall not lose, were life a thousand years,
The speechless blessing of those grateful eyes.

WILLIAM MASON

As some benign magician doth he sit
Before the ivory keys, and at his will
Rise heavenly dreams and fancies sweet that flit
Like spirits of delight the soul to thrill.
At his delicious touch the music flows,
A golden tide of melody divine,
Till the heart kindles at the sound, and glows,
Draining deep draughts of an immortal wine.
All moods,—and rest, refreshment, joy, warmth, light,
Youth and its roses call him from the keys
That lie before him mute and cold and white;
The Master he, his willing vassals these.
And would you kindness know that has no end?
Know him! And I am proud to call him friend.

ROMANCE

O soft and cool the pure, delicious breeze
Of morning blew across the sparkling bay,
And ringed with emerald and sapphire seas
Melting in golden distance Capri lay.

The little steamer smoked and puffed and ploughed
Through waves like jewels leaping in the sun,
Her freight a gay and pleasure-seeking crowd,
Bent on a day's enjoyment, every one.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

Aft, in a corner, sheltered from the glare,
Two travellers sat quietly and close,
One sunny-haired and exquisitely fair,
With cheek as delicate as some fresh rose.

The crowd, the place, the planet might have been
Obliterated for that charming bride!
Under her parasol's dark silken screen
Six feet of manliness sat by her side.

Just so much measured her enchanted world!
Her whole horizon, it was plain to see.
With one gloved hand his blond moustache he curled
And forward leaned to whisper tenderly.

Their elegance and most distinguished grace
My swift glance caught, swept heedlessly that way,
As wave and sky to me, they held their place,
Part of the pageant of the perfect day.

Mediterranean splendors! What to her
Were matchless color and consummate form,
Vesuvius or Capri, or the stir
Of jewelled waves or breezes soft and warm?

The lovely island near and nearer drew,
Vesuvius' dusky plume lay thin and light
Behind us, dreaming in the lofty blue,—
Naples along the coast line glittered white.

Ah, how divinely beautiful! I thought,
And gazing round me with delighted eyes,
Again they chanced across the two and caught
A sudden dazzling gleam of Paradise.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

'Twas but a look I saw her lift 'to him,
Swift, furtive,—but glory of the earth
Before its tempered radiance faded dim,
The wide world's beauty seemed as nothing worth

Compared to this strong, sweet and wondrous dream.
This hint of heaven, this potent spell,
This deep bewilderment of bliss supreme
No mind can fathom and no tongue can tell.

Alas! 'Twas long ago, I wonder where
Unresting Time has borne them since that day.
The handsome lover and the lady fair.
Measureless spaces from that dream away!

But Nature keeps her youth, still Capri lies
Melting in sapphire, rose and amethyst,
The air breathes soft, clear smile the tender skies,
And the bright coast by sparkling waves is kissed.

HARK

Hark, the sweet chant, "O holy, holy, holy,"
With voices clear the waiting angels sing,
Standing about the mother meek and lowly
Whose calm breast pillows soft heaven's new born king.

Loud swells the chorus, "Pain is lost in glory."
Ye nations of the earth, exalt His name.
Sound, golden pipes, and tell the wondrous story
Of love divine that to man's rescue came.

Lo, He shall vanquish death with cheer immortal,
Shall conquer woe and triumph over sin,
His hand shall open wide the heavenly portal,
That all God's souls may safely enter in.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

KATE VANNAH

In winter, when the world was locked in frost,
I built up fancies sweet, a little song,
With after-glow from vanished summers crossed:
And, listening, heard the bitter wind blow strong

The while I fashioned, with a hand untaught,
The airy shape, and lifted toward the light
Its thought of youth and joy—I only sought
To make the dreary winter day more bright.

But when the snows had fled into the north
Before the south wind, and the gracious year
Brought all its flowers and all its splendors forth,
And midsummer in all its pomp was here,

One came and looked upon the trellis slight
Of words I wrote in that sad winter time,
And clothed the slender shape with life and light,
And fitted music to my idle rhyme.

And now a wealth of flowers that shape upholds,
That ring sweet bells and up to heaven climb,
And beauty all its poverty enfolds,
A treasure of eternal summertime.

It is not worthy thus to be made fair,
So woven about by loveliness and grace,
So touched to blossom by enchanted air,
So clothed with splendor in its humble place.

I clasp the hand that worked a spell so fine,
And to the brain that delicately wrought,
Bring homage, joyful any work of mine
Should be ennobled by such lofty thought.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

AWAKENING

Well—I said, it is all too true
The story told to my childish ears,
That tears were many and joys were few,
And hopeless the weight of gathering years.

I never believed a word of the tale,
And turned to the sun and rejoiced in the day.
But a blow struck home and the light grew pale
Till bitter darkness beset the way.

Oh, what is it all? (I pondered)—what
This terrible life wherein we are set
Defenceless, whether we will or not?
Where the swift years weave us a golden net

Of joys so sweet and of hopes so bright.
Only to rob us day by day,
Slowly to take from the eyes their sight.
Steal all the body's senses away,

And deal to the soul such blows of loss
Through the hand of Death?—and there I ceased.
For a wave too bitter rolled across,
And a longing never to be appeased

Shook me with sorrow beyond all thought.
Outside I heard the spring wind sigh.
As if the paths of life it caught,
And strove to utter it, wandering by,

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

When in a moment, the door swung wide,
Sunshine and flowers and songs of birds
Swept in with you like a golden tide,
Sweetness and rapture too deep for words.

O Love, you brought to me youth and spring,
Took me by storm with glad surprise,
And set my whole soul worshipping,
And saved my life with the look in your eyes!

And while you are left to me, no more
Can my heart be dull as a senseless clod;
While you hold me fast with those eyes so sure,
Humbly I reach for the hand of God.

TO LAURENCE HUTTON

On his fiftieth birthday

The best of canny Scotland's blood
Makes merry in his veins,
A glowing tide—a tranquil flood
That all her wit contains.

The noblest gifts that mark the race
She gave him at his birth.
And wrote upon his genial face
Her sign and seal of worth.

And so the world's applause is loud
And clear the voice of Fame.
What wonder that his friends are proud
Of Laurence Hutton's name!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

THE WATER-LILY

Up from the placid river,
One summer morning bright,
Came a merry boy to his mother,
With a water-lily white.

Sweet as a breath of heaven.
Whiter than drifted snow:
The freshest, holiest flower
Among all flowers that blow.

And on her breast she laid it.
Wondering, it was so fair—
Up rose the pure rich perfume
Like an embodied prayer.

The boy forgot the flower;
And, later, from his play
Returning, warm and rosy,
Called his mother loud and gay.

And when she answered softly,
And her quiet work forsook,
He paused and gazed upon her
With an unaccustomed look.

And over the delicate lily
He bowed his lovely head;
Then lifted his face and kissed her
With lips like strawberries red.

And said, with his young face shining
Clear as a morning star;
“Sweet is the lily, mother,
But your kiss is sweeter far.”

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

IN THE VALLEY

The trees stood up in stillness,
There was no wind to sigh.
Like warm tears fell the sudden rain
Out of the morning sky,

Then ceased; and the autumn quiet
Was broken by no sound,
As the last gold leaves of the maple
Fell wavering to the ground.

Then the waking world blushed softly
With tender tints of rose,
And I heard from the far, wild mountains
The clamoring of the crows.

And I knew how, high in the heavens,
O'er the forest-tops and the rocks.
They wheeled in the furthest distance
Their ragged and dusky flocks.

Their faint and broken clamor,
That rang through the cloudy sky,
Seemed calling me out of the quiet,
With harsh, imperious cry.

As if from the world's dull tumult
Of hurry and strife and wrong,
Beyond the protecting mountains,
A summons sounded strong.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

But O, the peace of the valley!
And fain was I to stay.
Clasping such warm, kind hands in mine.
So sheltered and safe alway.

O faint, discordant voices,
O dark, sad birds that call,
Tomorrow, I said, I wander
Beyond the blue mountain-wall.

But the valley's peace shall be sweeter
For the blessing I leave behind;
For thoughts like troops of white-winged doves
Sent back to this threshold kind.

The love I leave in the gentle house
Shall blossom sweet as a rose;
Shall linger with all summer's warmth,
Untouched by the winter snows.

ALMIGHTY LOVE

Out of the blackness of night springs the glory of morn.
Out of the deeps of sorrow shall joy emerge.
From the trouble of tears is the rainbow of beauty born
To span the track of the tempest from verge to verge.

Look up to the splendor of God, O ye mourners of earth.
To the promise of faith, to the Hope that shall not fail.
For death is no longer death, but a glorious birth.
And over despair and darkness shall Love prevail.

Yea, the glory is thine, O Love that never forsakes!
Almighty Love, Thy touch doth the grave destroy.
And the prisoned soul from its chrysalis dim outbreaks.
And heavenward floats in a rapture of light and joy!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

A SERMON

He that hath so many reasons for joy....is very much in love with sorrow and peevishness, who loses all....and chooses to sit down on his little handful of thorns.—

—*Jeremy Taylor*

Is it worth the while to frown and fret
And waste the hours in vain regret,
And every pleasant thing forget
 And only pain remember?
To mourn because the skies are wet,
Because the dull clouds hold a threat,
Because the sun so soon must set
 In dark and drear December?

Why, summer's buds are but asleep,
Wrapt in their dreaming soft and deep,
Their beauty folded close they keep,
 To send abroad in gladness,
When from the earth the storms shall sweep,
And bitter vapors cease to weep,
And life again to light shall leap,
 Escaped from winter's sadness.

Has love passed by? Are friends grown cold?
Do precious things slip from your hold?
And do you shrink from growing old
 While many cares perplex you?
Yet will there be some heart of gold
That fails you not, fond hands to fold
Your own in faith and trust untold—
 Let not your losses vex you—

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

What matter if dark locks grow grey?
Lo, Peace upon your head shall lay
Her heavenly hand, the skies of May
 Shall light your inner vision—
Look up! Look up! for every day
Some blessing brightens on your way,
Accept God's WILL, learn to obey,
 And sweet will grow submission.

CHRISTMAS EVE

Through the wide darkness of the night,
 From heaven's golden bars,
What vision floats serenely bright,
 'Neath the keen sparkling stars?

Whence comes this sweet, immortal cheer?
 Who brings the holy sign?
O sleeping city, wake and hear
 The messenger divine.

'Tis Christmas Eve, with outspread wings
 God's angel floats above,
To all the waiting earth she brings
 The blessing of His love.

Bearing a torch to kindle high
 Joy's fires on Christmas morn,
While all the choirs of heaven shall cry
 “Rejoice! for Christ is born.”

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

AND HIS WILL IS OUR PEACE

(*E la sha volontate e nostra pace*)

Dante—par. III—85

O restless soul of man, unsatisfied
With the world's empty noise and feverish glare,
Sick with its hopes of happiness denied,
The dust and ashes of its promise fair,

Baffled and buffeted, thy days perplexed,
Thy cherished treasures profitless and vain,
What comfort hast thou, captive, thwarted, vexed,
Mocked by mirage of joys that merge in pain?

Though Love be sweet, yet Death is strong, and still
Inexorable Change will follow thee,
Yea,—though thou vanquish every mortal ill
Thou shalt not conquer Mutability!

The human tide goes rushing down to death,
Turn thou a moment from its current broad
And listen, what is this that silence saith,
O Soul? “Be still, and know that I am God!”

The mighty God! Here shalt thou find thy rest,
O weary one! There is naught else to know,
Naught else to seek,—here thou mayest cease thy quest;
Give thyself up, He leads where thou shalt go.

The changeless God! Into thy troubled life
Steals strange, sweet peace; the pride that drove thee on,
The hot ambition and the selfish strife
That made thy misery, like mist are gone,

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

And in their place, a bliss beyond all speech,
The patient resignation of the will
That lifts thee out of bondage, out of reach
Of death and change, above all earthly ill.

FROM A CORNER

In the dusk of the winter evening
 The curtains are drawn, and the light
Burns clear, and the brightness and comfort
 Defy the dark, boisterous night.

At the long room's end, in the corner,
 Sits one with an artist's eyes,
Watching the changing pictures
 That ever before her rise.

At the piano together
 Father and daughter begin
A sudden tumult of music;
 And the tones of the violin

Pierce with a wonderful sweetness
 The air of the quiet room,
Till beautiful thoughts and fancies
 Break into delicate bloom.

With loose, rich locks of silver,
 Stately the father stands,
Like the statues which Michelangelo
 Carved with his skilful hands;

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

And the daughter is touched with the tropics,
Inheriting warmth and power,
Brilliant and glowing in color
As a fresh pomegranate-flower.

They play together: the father
Over her head looks down,
And gathers his smooth white forehead
Into a splendid frown,

That yields to a smile at the voices,
As of spirits to heaven akin,
He calls with caressing gesture
From the exquisite violin.

Ah, but the charming picture!
His outlines grave and grand;
Her simple, sweet, frank presence
With youth's bright rainbow spanned;

His mystic and marble pallor;
Her midnight eyes, and her smile
That dazzles like sunshine at noonday
Flashed over the river Nile—

The ancient Nile! For behold her!
How full of tokens and hints
Of a beauty oriental
In wonderful tones and tints!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

And the power of the East is in her,
The bright pomegranate-flower.
Thus muses our friend in the corner.
Enjoying the lovely hour.

There comes a ring at the door-bell.
A sound of trouble and ill:
The sparkling piano ceases
And the violin is still:

And turns the stately maestro,
Like a lion about to growl.
And welcomes the dull newcomer
With such a magnificent scowl:

“Good-evening, neighbor.”—“Good-evening.”—
“ ‘Tis a bitter night.”—“Oh yes.”—
“I think it will snow tomorrow.”
What echoes of emptiness!

“And how is your influenza?
And, pray, have you heard the news,
How Smith is dead, and his nephew
Steps into his wealthy shoes?”

The gods take flight to Olympus,
And the matchless charm, that thrilled
The air with a rich enchantment,
Like a rose by frost is killed.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

TO PASTURE

There's a touch of frost in the crisp, fresh air,
And the trees and hedges are growing bare,
And Autumn says, "It is my turn now,"
As she strips the leaves from the patient bough.

All in the bright morning comes little Justine,
With the prettiest bossy that ever was seen.
But though he's so sleek and so handsome a calf,
He has too much will of his own, by half.

And he does not like to be led away
From his mother's side in the early day,
Where the little maid's feet so lightly go,
He veers about and he trots so slow!

He'd say, if only the power had he,
"Justine, why couldn't you let me be?
I'd rather go back at once, if you please,
To yonder barn by the poplar trees.

O milk is good and clover is tough,
And I haven't begun to have breakfast enough,
And I know the meadow you take me to
Is cold and wet with the frosty dew!"

But little Justine with a merry laugh
Cries, "Hurry, my beautiful bossy calf!
You will have nothing to do all day
But to sleep and to eat and to frisk and to play.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

'Tis a lovely place I shall tether you in.
There are many there of your kith and kin.
You'll not be lonesome: there's plenty to eat.
You must learn to nibble the grass so sweet."

The wind blows her pretty blue cloak away
From her scarlet skirt and her apron gray.
And ruffles the mass of her yellow hair.
And kisses her cheeks that are rosy and fair.

And she looks so charming and blithe and gay.
As she trips so carelessly down the way!
But the bossy hangs back, and, "O dear," thinks he.
"Justine, how I wish you would let me be."

SONNET

Superb the human type, superb the power,
The genius high, that like a starry fire
Set in the sky in some auspicious hour,
Bids all the world look upward and admire
If such a wonder comes within the scope
Of Nature's plan, can death destroy its light,
And splendid possibilities of hope
Flash to man's dark horizon from its height?
Great is the race that once in centuries
Blossoms in such a glorious guise at last!
Who will believe so grand a spirit dies,
Remembering how this stately creature passed,
And with imperial step life's highway trod.
Crowned with the calm of some immortal god.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

LISEL

When the summer morning broke,
 Faintly flushing in the sky.
Happy little Lisel woke,
 Rose to greet it joyfully.

In the dewy hush she heard
 Far and near a music sweet
From the throat of many a bird,—
 Heard her little kid's low bleat,—

Hastened forth and sought his shed,
 Loosed him, frisking in his mirth,
While the glory overhead
 Bathed in beauty heaven and earth.

Heavy lay the morning dew,
 Cool and soft the morning mist,
High above them in the blue
 Roses all the cloud flocks kissed.

Little kid so lightly pranced!
 Little maid so patiently
Led him while he leaped and danced!
 “Wait,” she said, “now quiet be,

While your stake into the ground
 Firm I push to hold you, dear,
Don't go skipping round and round,
 Wait, my pretty, don't you hear?”

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

Happy, happy summer dawn!
 Happy kid and happy child!
Far from the world's din withdrawn
 In the mountain pasture wild!

Freedom, innocence and health,
 Simple duties, quiet bliss,
In their lowly life such wealth,
 Kings might envy peace like this.

WHAT CHEER?

“What news, what comfort do you bring,
Say, gossip, say,
As you come back on tired wing,
Adown the airy way?”

“So high above the trees I flew,
High, gossips, high!
I saw a little rift of blue,
A lovely glimpse of sky.”

“And is it true that storms will cease,
True, gossip, true?”
“O yes, the winds will be at peace,
The sun will shine on you!”

So chirp and chatter, sweet and gay,
Pipe, gossips, call!
Fast comes the happy spring this way,
Brave gossips all!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

A VIOLET

I know a pair of clear gray eyes,
And sweet they are, and calm and wise.

And when their still gaze rests on me,
The sky of dawn I seem to see;

The sky of dawn, without a bar,
Of mist to dim the morning star.

And spring winds softly seem to blow,
And stir the crocus 'neath the snow:

And breathing sweeter, warmer yet,
They call the first shy violet:

And lo! within my hand it lies,
A fresh and beautiful surprise.

God's gift, more precious and more dear
Than all the flowers that crown the year.

The soul that looks from those dark eyes,
So brave and true, so pure and wise,

God keep it while the years endure.
Forever sweet, forever pure.

Above all mists and vapors far,
Uplifted like the morning star.

A dauntless, deathless splendor, bright
With truth, and clear to all new sight!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

IN SWITZERLAND

On the dark dull day, through Zurich town,
Glided the train from the station out.
The while from the windows, up and down,
An eager traveller peered about.

Red-tiled roofs with their gables quaint.
Misty mountains all dim and gray.
Glimpse of the lake's rare color faint.
Came and went as it crept away.

Under the eaves, at a casement queer.
Swung out like a door, was a pleasant sight,
A little Swiss maiden, fair and dear.
Was scrubbing the small panes clean and bright.

O, but a sweet, dear child was she.
Little old-fashioned, charming maid!
Her blonde hair, just as her mother's might be
Coiled high up in a golden braid.

And with what purpose and cheer scrubbed she,
Turning the window this way and that,
Pushing it backward and forward to see.
As perched on the low broad sill she sat.

Little she knew as with such a will.
She toiled away with her cheerful might.
How one admired her homely skill,
And her pretty self as she passed from sight!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

Now when I remember quaint Zurich town,
There comes like a picture before my eyes,
With her yellow hair and her homespun gown,
That little maid and her labor wise.

And I think she will so clean and clear
The window whence her soul must see
Life's various shadow and shine appear,
And watch with patience what there may be.

For if only the glass of the mind is clean,
Then brighter the sun and lighter the shade!
Sorrows less bitter, joys more serene,
By the cheerful spirit are surely made.

CHRISTMAS

Carol sweet and carol clear,
'Tis the day that crowns the year!
Up to Thee our hearts we raise;
Songs of joy and songs of praise
On the quiet air we pour;
Hear, O Christ, whom we adore!
Thou. God's spirit and God's gift,
Up to Thee our love we lift.

Happy day and holy hour
When man's hope broke into flower!
When God's promise was fulfilled,
Doubts were cancelled, fears were stilled,
When the Word Incarnate came
Clothed in music, winged with flame!
Carol sweet and carol clear,
'Tis the day that crowns the year!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

SEASIDE FLOWERS

Along the brim of the curving cove the small blue skull
cap sits,
Where the grey beach bird, with happy cry, in safety feeds
and flits,
And spreads or shuts the pimpernel its drowsy buds to tell
When rain will come, or skies will clear, the pretty pimper-
nel!
And the pink herb Robert all the day holds up its rosy
flowers,
While high above with a purple plume the lofty thistle
towers,
And the golden potentilla blows, and the crow foot laughs
in the sun,
And over rock and bush and turf wild morning glories
run.
They look down o'er the tiny cove, out to the blue, blue
sea,
Neighbors and friends, all beautiful, a joyful company;
And when the tide comes brimming in with soft and gentle
rush
It is as if the murmuring sound said to the silence, "Hush!"
All down the narrow beach the lilac mussel shells are
strown
Among the scattered pebbles, and by the polished stone
Where the sea's hands have worn the ledge till smooth as
ivory—
O such a place on summer days to put your cheek, and lie
Listening to all the whispering waves that round the point
go by!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

For the sun has warmed the hard cold rock till it almost
human seems,
And such a pillow as it makes for childhood's blissful
dreams!
The little glad, caressing waves! They bring their treasures
gay
To deck the lovely quiet beach, nor fail day after day
To strew the slope with crimson dulse and olive seaweed
sprays,
And lace-like empty urchin shells, all rough with dull
green rays,
The limpet's hollow, mottled house, and amber snail shells
bright,
And brown and shining ruffled kelps and cockles, snowy
white.
O such a happy, happy world! Were I to talk all day,
Not half the joy of that sweet spot could I begin to say!
And all the charming band of flowers that watch the sea
and sky,
They seem to know and love the winds that gently pass
them by:
They seem to feel the freshness of the waves at every tide
As they cross the quiet water that sparkles far and wide.
The bright sails go and come at will, the white gulls float
in air,
The song sparrow and sandpiper are flitting everywhere,
But the dark blue skull cap never sighs to leave its pleasant
home,
With butterfly, or thistle-down, or sandpiper to roam,
The pink herb Robert nestles close, content in sun or rain.
Nor envies the white far sails that glide across the ocean
plain;
The golden potentilla sees the soaring gull on high

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

Yet never does she wish for wings to join him in the sky,
For all these wise and lovely lives accord with God's intent,

Each takes its lot and bears its bloom as kindly nature meant.

Whatever weather fortune sends, they greet it patiently,
Each only striving its own way a perfect thing to be.

O tell me, little children, have you on summer days
Heard what the winds are whispering and what the water says?

The small birds' chirp, the cry of gulls, the crickets' quiet creak:—

And have you seen the charming things that have no power to speak,

The dear, sweet humble little flowers that all so silently Teach such a lovely lesson every day, to you and me?

Go seek them, if you know them not, when summer comes once more

You'll find a pleasure in them you never knew before!

TEMPEST

O flying sails that scud before the gale,
O frowning clouds that drive o'er the dark sea,
O melancholy winds that pipe and wail
Your hopeless chorus, ye are dear to me!

For my swift thoughts before a sadder gale
Fly, seeking some safe harbor, some sweet rest,
Tossed on a restless sea, confused and pale,
Mist-blurred and sorrowful and all unblest.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

And my horizon gathers gloom and frowns
With folded clouds that blacken the bright day,
Heavy with tears, and the wind's wailing drowns
In speechless sorrow all that Hope can say.

And yet a smile through the despairing mood
Breaks, half in mockery, half in wholesome cheer;
Shall one storm spoil the world, wreck all the good,
And flood thy little life with doubt and fear?

Thy little fleeting life, so soon at end
Upon this swinging star! Thy breathing-space
This side death's awful gate:—and wilt thou spend
In quarrelling with fate thy priceless days?

Not so, sad heart, be not so base. Behold,
There is no storm time may not smooth away;
There is no night of darkness dead and cold,
That may not brighten with returning day.

God sends his tempests wrestling round the world
That health may follow, and thy little life
Owns the same land, though thy soul's sky is whirled
Mid clouds and all the elements of strife.

What fear'st thou? Earthquake, fire, flood, hurricane,
May not destroy thee. To thy striving soul
God's endless opportunities remain,
When wrath is spent and thunders cease to roll.

Let their ignoble sighing end, and set
Thy feet firm on the Truth, and keep thou calm.
At last shall pass the trouble and the fret,
And peaceful days shall follow, breathing balm.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

TURN HOME AGAIN

What dost thou, little fishing boat,
From the green flowery coast remote?
Adown the west the sun sinks fast,
It lights thy sail and slender mast,
The day declines,—O, haste thee home!
Against the rocks the breakers foam.

Under the measureless blue sky
Eastward the vast sea spaces lie:
Wide scattered sails upon the tide
Down o'er the world's great shoulder glide,
Or silent climb the trackless waste—
But little fisher boat, make haste!

Over, the white gulls soar high and scream.
Soft clouds meet in a golden dream.
Bleached rocks and turfey valleys lie
Steeped in a bright tranquillity,
But autumn wanes, and well I know
How wild the hurricane may blow!

Before thee lies the lonely coast.
Beckons, and like a friendly ghost,
The lighthouse signals thee; afar
I see its gleaming silver star,
Where the sun smites its glittering pane.
O, little skiff, glide home again!

Somewhere along the land's fair line
A light of love for thee will shine
When presently the shadows fall.
And eyes to which thy gleam is all
Of good the round world holds, will gaze
Out o'er the darkening ocean ways

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

To seek thee: then pray hasten home!
Here swings the breaker into foam—
The waning moon breeds many a gale,
Turn then, and gladden with thy sail
The faithful eyes that long for thee;
The heart that fears the treacherous sea.

RIGHT AND WRONG

Listen! listen, how the birds are singing,
Little children dear!
Through the morning air their joy is ringing;
See the bluebird to the elm-twigs clinging!
All his sweetest songs abroad he's flinging!
Beautiful and clear.

Look! oh, look, how fast the flowers are growing,
Every child to please!
Violets soon their blue eyes will be showing,
Dandelions' golden stars be glowing,
Clouds of fragrant, rosy blossoms snowing
From the apple-trees.

What can mar this happiness of ours?
Little children, say!
What can steal the color from the flowers.
Dull their scent and chill the summer showers,
Spoil the bird's note, rob the golden hours,
Dim the radiant day?

Right and wrong are in the world before us:
Wrong alone can harm.
Wrong can darken all the bright sky o'er us.
Break with discords harsh the birds' sweet chorus:
Right alone to perfect joy restore us.
Sheltered in God's arm.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

ENTREATY

Dear little bird, the snowflakes whirl about you,
The bare twig where you cling blows up and down;
And how the cold wild wind does toss and flout you,
And ruffle all your feathers soft and brown!

Ah, do come in and stay till storms are ended.
Dear little bird! I'll be so good to you,
There's such a fire burning bright and splendid,
And here it is so warm and quiet too.

See, on the steps I scatter crumbs, come nearer.
Do, pretty creature! Don't be frightened, pray;
For all the little birds to me are dearer
Than I could tell you, so don't fly away.

I am so sorry that the tempest caught you.
When you came back so brave, to tell of spring!
Did you forget how last year March winds fought you,
Or did you come, in spite of them, to sing?

If you would only let me feed and warm you,
I'd be so gentle! Your poor claws should cling
Round such a warm, kind finger—I would charm you
With such a soft caress, dear shivering thing!

O won't you come? I'm afraid you'll perish:
The dark comes, and 'tis wild as it can be;
If you could understand how I would cherish
And comfort you, I know you'd fly to me.

And then tomorrow, if the sun shone, gladly
I'll throw the window wide and set you free.
You dare not come? Goodnight then, dear, and sadly
I shut the door, sorry as I can be.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

A SONG OF SPRING

“Sing a song of Spring,” cried the merry March wind loud,
As it swept to the earth from the dark breast of the cloud,
But the windflowers and the violets were yet too sound
 asleep

Under the snow’s white blanket, close folded soft and deep.

“Sing a song of Spring,” cried the pleasant April rain,
With a thousand sparkling tones upon the window pane,
And the flowers hidden in the ground woke dreamily and
 stirred,

From root to root, from seed to seed, crept swift the happy
 word.

“Sing a song of Spring,” cried the sunshine of the May,
And the whole world into blossom burst in one delightful
 day,

The patient apple trees blushed bright in clouds of rosy
 red,

And the dear birds sang with rapture in the blue sky over-
 head.

And not a single flower small that April’s raindrops woke.
And not a single little bird that into music broke,
But did rejoice to live and grow and strive to do its best,
Faithful and dutiful and brave through every trials’ test.

I wonder if we children all are ready as the flowers
To do what God appoints for us through all His days and
 hours,

To praise Him in our duties done with faithful joy, because
The smallest of those duties belong to His great laws.

O Violets, who never fret and say, “I won’t!” “I will!”
Who only live to do your best His wishes to fulfill,
Teach us your sweet obedience that we may grow to be
Happy like you, and patient as the steadfast apple tree.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

TO A CHILD WITH EASTER LILIES

Child, with the lily branch so white,
Held aloft in a rosy hand,
Soft is the path to thy footfalls light,
Lovely the sky o'er thy morning land.

Thou gazest into the perfumed snow
And the golden heart of the wondrous flower,
And while the breezes of morning blow,
Thou canst not dream of a darker hour.

Ah, beloved, when by and by,
Noon burns hot o'er the dusty way,
And the wind that sang can only sigh,—
When the rose of dawn turns ashes-gray;

While through shadows thy footsteps grope,
If then thy lilies do but keep,
Their beauty shall bring thee strength and hope,
Rest and refreshment glad and deep.

And thou shalt know how fair a gift
Are the pure white fragrant flowers of God;
Their perfume shall thy heart uplift,
And lead thee back where thy childhood trod;

Till thou shalt see with self-same eyes
Of the happy baby of long ago,
The shining meadows of Paradise
Before thee blossom and smile and glow.

And find thy peace, thy joy, thy faith,
A sunny calm after weary strife,
While the radiant angel whose name is Death
Leads thee safe into endless life.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

THE GREEN LEAVES WHISPER LOW

The wind-harp sings in the casement wide
A fitful song that is sad and slow,
While the summer sunset burns outside,
And the green leaves whisper low.

A fair head leans on a lily hand,
And clear eyes study the sky's red glow—
The loveliest lady's in all the land—
While the green leaves whisper low.

“O wind-harp, listen, and cease to grieve;
O warm south wind, less wildly blow;
For my lover rides through the golden eve,
While the green leaves whisper low.”

A step, a cry, and the dusky room
A splendor swift seems to overflow;
A glory lights the enchanted gloom,
While the green leaves whisper low.

He brings the dawn in his happy eyes;
Yet grieve, O wind-harp, sad and slow—
Grieve, for the matchless moment flies,
While the green leaves whisper low.

Tomorrow, choked by the battle's breath,
A new embrace shall her lover know—
Not the kiss of love, but the kiss of death --
While the green leaves whisper low.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

CHRISTMAS ANGEL

Lo, the sweet Christmas Angel, high and far,
In the clear, silent ether, poised between
The light, white crescent and the golden star.
Floats o'er the dreaming world with brow serene.

The sweet and stately Angel! on the air
Loosing her fair white dove, to cleave the blue
Down the wide spaces of the sky to bear
On snowy pinions peace and joy to you!

Peace and good-will to men! Look up and hail
The tidings beautiful, the news of cheer!
O Sons of Earth, the promise shall not fail
Of love that saves, and hope that knows no fear!

MOONLIGHT

The salutation of the moonlit air,
Night's dewy breath, the fragrance of the brine,
The waste of moving waters everywhere,
The whispering of waves,—a hush divine,—

Leagues of soft murmuring dusk to the sea's rim,
The infinite, illimitable sky,
Wherein the great orb of the moon on high
In stillness down the quiet deeps doth swim:

Behold the awful beauty of the night,
The solemn tenderness, the peace profound,
The mystery,—God's glory in the light

And darkness both,—His voice in every sound!
Be silent and behold where hand in hand
Great Nature and great Art together stand!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

IN DARKNESS

Cold sail, against the evening gray
Departing down the world's dim slope;
Pale ghost, thou seem'st to bear away
My every joy, my every hope.

What thoughts are these? What pallid brood
Of phantoms from the past emerge?
Is this the world that seemed so good,
Brimming with joy from verge to verge?

Was morning only fair to mock
The bitterness of after years,
While Fate was waiting to unlock
The unsuspected fount of tears?

Cold the gray sky and cold the sail
That fades into the distance cold;
The level sea lies cold and pale,
And sorrow as the world is old.

Yea, sorrow as the world is old.
But lo, along the sullen gloom
Steal broken gleams of ruddy gold
That far the pathless waste illume.

Jove's planet up the darkness swings.
Oh, happy light from heaven that pours
Across the bitter brine, and brings
A glimmer to the hopeless shores,

Touch me, and let me climb by thee.
That I may find above the pain
Of these dark hours my peace and see
My heights of heavenly joy again!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

THE ONLY FOE

Wild, threatening sky, white, raging sea,
Fierce wind that rends the rifted cloud,
Sets the new moon's sharp glitter free,
And thunders eastward, roaring loud!

A fury rides the autumn blast,
The hoary brine is torn and tossed;
Great Nature through her spaces vast
Casts her keen javelins of the frost.

Her hand that in the summer days
Soothed us with tender touch of joy,
Deals death upon her wintry ways;
Whom she caressed she would destroy.

Life shrinks and hides; all creatures cower
While her tremendous bolts are hurled,
That strike with blind, insensate power
The mighty shoulder of the world.

Be still, my soul, thou hast no part
In her black moods of hate and fear;
Lifted above her wrath thou art,
On thy still heights, serene and clear.

Remember this,—not all the wild,
Huge, untamed elements have force
To reach thee, though the seas were piled
In weltering mountains on thy course.

Only thyself thyself can harm.
Forget it not! And, full of peace,
As if the south wind whispered warm,
Wait thou till storm and tumult cease.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

A MORNING VISION

Down the deserted road to take the train,
That roaring sped toward the far city's din,
I went at early morn. There had been rain
The night before, and very wan and thin
The last snow streaked the pastures left and right,
And all the landscape lay in colors sad,
Save where the keen blue river flashed in sight
Beneath the clear March sunshine, broad and glad.
But Nature's steady pulse was beating strong
With the Spring's mighty impulse. Yet a space,
And the year's splendid youth, with bloom and song,
Would fill with joy and beauty all the place.
And, pondering on the happy future, slow
I kept my way, rejoicing in the hope
Beneath the surface sadness cold, when lo!
A figure came to meet me up the slope.
Seemed the incarnate spirit of the Spring,
With all the Summer's promise in her face.
A slender, gray-cloaked school-girl, traveling
Up the dull road with step of power and grace.
The torrent of her brown, abundant hair
Tossed loose about her; the wild wind of March.
Lifting it lightly, blew it high in air,
Like some soft, glorious, golden-crested arch
Of cloudy billow wavering o'er her head.
Shimmering in sunshine. 'Twas a sight to see!
One of the books she carried still she read.
Conning her half-learned lesson eagerly.
Her face bent o'er the page; but, when at last
We drew together, her calm eyes she raised,

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

And gave me one swift look as she went past.

Then saw I beauty worthy to be praised!

Under such level brows those large dark eyes

Looked fearless out, and round the mouth's repose
Such gentle purpose lived, and like the skies

When dawn is blushing, on her cheek the rose
So delicately blossomed that I said,

Below my breath, "Oh! sweet, the wintry day
Grows warm at sight of you," as fast she sped

Unconscious of me, on her upward way;
The wind still blowing her brown hair aloft,

Lifting the heavy silken mass as though
It loved to touch a web so bright and soft,

And steal the rich warmth from its vivid glow.
And so she passed from sight; but all day long

The vision held me like a dream of good—
The beautiful, bright creature, fair and strong,
Type of America's young womanhood.

And never will the picture fade away;

That youthful splendor flashes back on me,
Superb as on the bitter, bleak March day

Of long ago, a lovely memory;
And like the genius of the land she seems,

Noble and gentle, purposeful and wise,
And like the spirit of the Spring, with gleams
Of Summer's glory in her radiant eyes.

And, though I know her not, nor guess what ways
Her feet may tread in life's thick wilderness,

I know that peace and joy shall crown her days,
So strong is she with woman's power to bless.

I know when that sweet head is bowed, and when
The bloom of morning leaves the brilliant face,

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

And "Time draws lines there with his antique pen,"
 And of her sumptuous youth is left no trace,
That better than the beauty of the morn
 The shadows of life's evening shall appear.
To natures such as these a calm is born
 Of storm and stress and tumult, and more dear
And precious will her loveliness have grown
 For every sad experience she has known.

FOR A FRIEND'S BIRTHDAY

Would I could bring you some beautiful gift,
 Something to gladden you, something to charm,
A blessing to brighten, to cheer, to uplift.
 A shield to protect you from shadow of harm!

Had I the power, I'd gather for you
 All the world's treasures of good and of fair,
All things to comfort you—friends that are true,
 Joys that are purest, and pleasures most rare.
These at your feet on your birthday I'd lay,
 Fill its swift moments with quiet delight,
Make it divine from its earliest ray,
 From the gleam of its morn to the dusk of its night.

Empty my hands, but my heart holds for you
 All the good wishes of heaven and earth,
Fragrant as roses at dawn in the dew—
 With these let me crown the glad day of your birth!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

THE POET'S FANCY

Lightfooted Iris, playing round the vessel,
Born of the sunshine and the flying spray.
When the long sullen billows roll and wrestle,
Leaping in airy dance along the way!

Fair fleeting splendor, delicately glowing,
With gracious color spanning the cold wave,
Where o'er the weary waste wild winds are blowing,
And wild with clamorous voice the waters rave.

So springs the poet's fancy, many-tinted,
Along the ocean where life's voyager goes.
Let but a wandering ray of light be hinted.
Beauty takes shape and like a rainbow glows.

So his sweet thought takes shape, leaps up and gladdens
And warms with rainbow gleams the wintry day,
And when life's cold winds chill and darkness saddens,
Spans with an arch of joy the dreary way.

TOGETHER SING

O lift your voices clear in chorus sweet,
To greet the Christmas morn that dawns once more!
On the still air the holy hymn outpour,
And yet again the lofty strain repeat;

The listening angels might rejoice to hear
A sound so high and pure,—might join the song,
Praising unheard, unseen, a glorious throng,
A choir invisible, light hovering near:

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

While the melodious organ pealing slow,
In golden tones resounding far and wide,
Bears the soul upward on its solemn tide,
Till all earth's sins and cares are left below.

Children of earth and heaven, together sing!
And hail the star of splendor set on high.
Let your hosannas echo to the sky
To welcome your Redeemer and your King!

AT EASTER TIME

Fresh airs through the heaven are blowing,
Soft vapors melt in the blue:
In music the streams are flowing,
And the world is clothed anew.

Life everywhere is waking,
And winter's woe is done;
Out of their prison breaking,
The flowers laugh in the sun.

O look abroad! O listen!
Sweet songs are in the skies;
God makes earth glow and glisten
Like the fields of Paradise.

O delight before us
As the fair days onward glide!
The birds' delicious chorus,
The splendor far and wide.

From the grass that is stealing slowly
To mantle the meadows in green,
From the crocus springing lowly
Where the golden daffodils lean.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

To the rainbow's delicate glory
Spanning the vast of the sky.
'Tis the same old heavenly story
Of beauty that cannot die.

Give thanks for the Easter gladness
With humble and grateful hearts;
Forgotten are doubt and sadness.
And the shadow of death departs.

THE KING AND THE BISHOP

"Hush!" said the king,
To the sister hounds at his knee,
"Thor and Woden, quiet be,
While I hear the bishop sing."

O fair to see,
Was the young bishop all robed in silk.
Cheeks red as roses, brow white as milk,
So beautiful was he.

O loud he sang!
His clear voice sweet as a golden flute
Leaped from his lips while the king stood mute,
And the whole air thrilled and rang.

Like a tuneful fire
Over the monarch and over the hounds
Suddenly swept the lovely sounds,
As from some heavenly choir.

Said the king, "Well done!
Now by my faith, a voice so pure,
So fresh, melodious, high and sure,
I have not heard, my son."

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

And as he said
From his finger he drew the ruby rare,
“Keep thou this sparkling ring to wear,
And these coins of gold so red.

Proud shalt thou be,
Till thou art old and canst no longer sing
Remembering thou didst charm the king,
Who will remember thee.”

THE PRINCESS HERMIONE

O but the Princess was proud and fair!
Slow she moved with a royal air.
A great King’s daughter as all might see,
The fair-haired lady, Hermione.

A little foot-page her train upbore
Lest film of dust from the polished floor
Should soil her garments of velvet fine,
Soft and lustrous and red as wine.

The little foot-page was filled with awe:
Seldom the Princess’s face he saw—
’Twas honor too much for such as he
To carry her rich train carefully.

They left the palace and went outside
To the terrace, marble-paved and wide;
Up and down for the air they paced
And he watched the back of her slender waist,

And he saw the glint of her sunny hair
’Neath the floating ostrich feathers rare.
And the lace and muslin about her neck,
White as a blossom without speck.

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

The heart of that little foot-page beat loud
As he gazed at the maiden so sweet and proud.
There never could be such another one!
No Princess like his beneath the sun.

They walked on the terrace up and down,
And safe he guarded the velvet gown.
But how could he know, that dear little page,
That the lady was lost in a weary rage.

Bored and tired almost to death,
Fretting and whispering, under her breath,
“O to be off and away, and fly
Where yonder fields in the sunshine lie!

To gather the flowers like other girls
Out of the sight of dukes and earls!
And leap the brook and climb the hill,
And wander wide at my own sweet will!

So tired am I and I may not scold,
Every hour in the day I’m told
Sit thus, stand so, speak this, do that
Till I feel as if I were ironed flat.

O to do something not planned before!
Not the same old routine o'er and o'er
From the morning light to the evening red,
And never a thought in my empty head—”

She stopped in the midst of her stately walk—
“I’d even like with a page to talk:”
And sadly into his face she gazed,
That dear little face that looked up amazed:

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

That dear little wistful, awe struck face,
And the pretty figure of childish grace,
The sweet eyes lifted in love and fear.
Wondering to see her stand so near—

Really, dear children. I hardly dare
To tell you what happened then and there.
But the Princess stooped and before he knew
She had kissed her lover as truth is true!

And there wasn't an earthquake, nor did the skies
Fall at once, as you might surmise,
And full of her hidden mirth she turned.
Not a sign of her face to be discerned.

And over the pavement once again
She swept in splendor with page and train,
But she said to herself, "I would that he
My little brother had chanced to be!"

And he and I 'mid the daisies white
Were chasing the butterflies out of sight,
Scampering merrily to and fro,
And no one to bid us do thus and so!"

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

ESSAYS

BY FRIENDS OF CELIA THAXTER

Many friends of Celia Thaxter wrote their recollections of this gifted woman. Some of their papers have been carefully saved and collected by her daughter-in-law, Mary G. Thaxter, in a scrap-book of clippings about the family and the Isles of Shoals. It is from this book of forty years ago that the readers of today, who are interested, may re-read the accounts of the rather unusual life and environment and the charm that was Celia Thaxter's.

THE EDITORS

CELIA THAXTER

By Annie Fields

If it were ever intended that a desolate island in the deep sea should be inhabited by one solitary family, then indeed Celia Thaxter was the fitting daughter of such a house.

In her history of the group of islands, which she calls *Among the Isles of Shoals*, she portrays, in a prose which for beauty and wealth of diction has few rivals, the unfolding of her nature under influences of sky, and sea, and solitude, and untrammeled freedom, such as have been almost unknown to civilized humanity in any age of the world. She speaks also of the effect produced, as she fancied, upon the minds of men by the eternal sound of the sea; a tendency to wear away the edge of human thought and perception. But this was far from being the case with regard to herself. Her eyesight was keener, her speech more distinct, the lines of her thoughts more clearly defined, her verse more strongly marked in its form, and the accuracy of her memory more to be relied upon, than was the case with almost any one of her contemporaries. Her painting, too, upon porcelain possessed the same character. Her knowledge of the flowers, and especially of the seaweeds with which she decorated it, was so exact that she did not require the originals before her vision. They were painted upon her mind's eye, where every filament and every shade seemed to be recorded. These "green growing things" had been the loved companions of her childhood, as they continued to be of her

womanhood, and even to reproduce their forms in painting was a delight to her. The written descriptions of natural objects give her history a place among the pages which possess a perennial existence. While White's Selborne, and the pictures of Bewick, and Thoreau's Walden, and the Autobiography of Richard Jefferies endure, so long will *Among the Isles of Shoals* hold its place with all lovers of nature. She says in one place, "All the pictures over which I dream are set in this framework of the sea. that sparkled and sang, or frowned and threatened, in the ages that are gone, as it does to-day."

The solitude of Celia Thaxter's childhood, which was not solitude, surrounded as she was with the love of a father and a mother, all tenderness, and brothers dear to her as her own life, developed in the child strange faculties. She was five years old when the family left Portsmouth,—old enough, given her inborn power of enjoyment of nature, to delight in the free air and the wonderful sights around her.

She gives in her book a pretty picture of the child watching the birds that flew against the lighthouse lantern, when they lived at White Island. The birds would strike it with such force as to kill themselves. "Many a May morning," she says, "have I wandered about the rock at the foot of the tower, mourning over a little apron brimful of sparrows, thrushes, robins, fire-winged blackbirds, many colored warblers and flycatchers, beautifully clothed yellowbirds, nuthatches, catbirds, even the purple finch and scarlet tanager and golden oriole, and many more beside,—enough to break the heart of a small child to think of! Once a great eagle flew against the lantern and shivered the glass."

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

Her father seems to have been a man of awful energy of will. Some disappointment in his hope of a public career, it has been said, decided him to take the step of withdrawing himself forever from the world of the mainland, and this attitude he appears to have sustained unflinchingly to the end. Her mother, with a heart stayed as unflinchingly upon love and obedience, seems to have followed him without murmur, leaving every dear association of the past as though it had not been. From this moment she became, not the slave, but the queen of her affections, and when she died in 1877, the sun appeared to set upon her daughter's life. On the morning after Mrs. Thaxter's sudden death, seventeen years later, a friend asked her eldest son where his mother was, with the intent to discover if she had been well enough to leave her room. "Oh," he replied, "her mother came in the night and took her away." This reply showed how deeply all who were near to Celia Thaxter were impressed with the fact that to see her mother again was one of the deepest desires of her heart.

The development wrought in her eager character by those early days of exceptional experience gives a new sense of what our poor humanity may achieve, left face to face with the vast powers of nature.

In speaking of the energy of Samuel Haley, one of the early settlers of the islands, she says he learned to live as independently as possible of his fellowmen; "for that is one of the first things a settler on the Isles of Shoals finds it necessary to learn." Her own lesson was learned perfectly. The sunrise was as familiar to her eyes as the sunset, and early and late the activity of her mind was rivaled by the ceaseless industry of her hands. She pays

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a tribute to the memory of Miss Peabody, of Newburyport, who went to Star Island in 1823 and "did wonders for the people during the three years of her stay.

"She taught school, visited the families, and on Sundays read to such audiences as she could collect, took seven of the poor female children to live with her at the parsonage, instructed all who would learn in the arts of carding, spinning, weaving, knitting, sewing, braiding mats, etc. Truly she remembered what Satan finds for idle hands to do, and kept all her charges busy, and consequently happy. All honor to her memory! She was a wise and faithful servant. There is still an affectionate remembrance of her among the present inhabitants, whose mothers she helped out of their degradation into a better life."

If it was not in Celia Thaxter's nature to teach in this direct way herself, she did not fail to appreciate and to stimulate excellence of every kind in others. Appledore was too far away in winter from the village at Star Island for any regular or frequent communication between them. Even so late as in the month of May she records watching a little fleet beating up for shelter under the lee of Appledore to ride out a storm. "They were in continual peril. It was not pleasant to watch them as the early twilight shut down over the vast weltering desolation of the sea, to see the slender masts waving helplessly from one side to another. Some of the men had wives and children watching them from lighted windows at Star. What a fearful night for them! They could not tell from hour to hour, through the thick darkness, if yet the cables held; they could not see till daybreak whether the sea had swallowed up their treasures. I wonder the wives were not

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

white-haired when the sun rose and showed them those little specks yet rolling in the breakers!" How clearly these scenes were photographed on the sensitive plate of her mind! She never forgot nor really lost sight of her island people. Her sympathy drew them to her as if they were her own, and the little colony of Norwegians was always especially dear to her. "How pathetic," she says, "the gathering of women on the headlands, when out of the sky swept the squall that sent the small boat staggering before it, and blinded the eyes, already drowned in tears, with sudden rain that hid sky and sea and boat from their eager gaze!"

What she was, what her sympathy was, to those people, no one can ever quite express. The deep devotion of their service to her brothers and to herself, through the long solitude of winter and the storm of summer visitors, alone could testify. Such service cannot be bought: it is the devotion born of affection and gratitude and admiration. Speaking of one of the young women who grew up under her eye, she often said, "What could I do in this world without Mina Burntssen? I hope she will be with me when I die." And there indeed, at the last, was Mina to receive the latest word and to perform the few sad offices.

To tell of the services Mrs. Thaxter rendered to some of the more helpless people about her, in the dark season, when no assistance from the mainland could be hoped for, would make a long and noble story in itself. Her good sense made her an excellent doctor; the remedies she understood, she was always on hand to apply at the right moment. Sometimes she was unexpectedly called to assist in the birth of a child, when knowledge and strength she

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was hardly aware of seemed to be suddenly developed. But the truth was she could do almost anything; and only those who knew her in these humbler human relations could understand how joyous she was in the exercise of her duties, or how well able to perform them. Writing to Mina from the Shoals once in March, she says: "This is the time to be here; this is what I enjoy! To wear my old clothes every day, grub in the ground, dig dandelions, and eat them too, plant my seeds and watch them, fly on the tricycle, row in a boat, get into my dressing-gown right after tea, and make lovely rag rugs all the evening, and nobody to disturb us, this is fun!" In the house and out of it she was capable of everything. How beautiful her skill was as a dressmaker, the exquisite lines in her own black or gray or white dresses testified to everyone who ever saw her. She never wore any colors, nor was anything like "trimming" ever seen about her; there were only the fine, free outlines, and a white handkerchief folded carefully about her neck and shoulders.

In her young days it was the same, with a difference! She was slighter in figure then, and overflowing with laughter, the really beautiful but noisy laughter which died away as the repose of manner of later years fell upon her. I can remember her as I first saw her, with the sea-shells which she always wore then around her neck and wrists, and a gray poplin dress defining her lovely form. She talked simply and fearlessly, while her keen eyes took in everything around her; she paid the tribute of her instantaneous laughter to the wit of others, never too eager to speak, and never unwilling. Her sense of beauty, not vanity, caused her to make the most of the good physical points she possessed; therefore, although she grew old

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

early, the same general features of her appearance were preserved. She was almost too well known even to strangers, in these later years at the Shoals, to make it worth while to describe the white hair carefully put up to preserve the shape of the head, and the small silver-crescent which she wore above her forehead; but her manner had become very quiet and tender, more and more affectionate to her friends, and appreciative of all men. One of those who knew her latterly wrote me: "Many of her letters show her boundless sympathy, her keen appreciation of the best in those whom she loved and her wonderful growth in beauty and roundness of character. And how delightful her enthusiasms were! As pure and clear as those of a child! She was utterly unlike anyone in the world, so that few people really understood her. But it seems to me that her trials softened and mellowed her, until she became like one of her own beautiful flowers, perfect in her full development; then in a night the petals fell, and she was gone."

The capabilities which were developed in her by the necessities of the situation, during her life at the Shoals in winter, were more various and remarkable than can be fitly told. The glimpses which we get in her letters of the many occupations show what energy she brought to bear upon the difficulties of the place.

In *Among the Isles of Shoals* she says: "After winter has fairly set in, the lonely dwellers at the Isles of Shoals find life quite as much as they can manage, being so entirely thrown upon their own resources that it requires all the philosophy at their disposal to answer the demand.... One goes to sleep in the muffled roar of the storm, and wakes to find it still raging with senseless fury.... The

weather becomes of the first importance to the dwellers on the rock; the changes of the sky and sea, the flitting of the coasters to and fro, the visits of the sea-fowl, sunrise and sunset, the changing moon, the northern lights, the constellations that wheel in splendor through the winter night,—all are noted with a love and careful scrutiny that is seldom given by people living in populous places.... For these things make our world; there are no lectures, operas, concerts, theatres, no music of any kind, except what the waves may whisper in rarely gentle moods, no galleries of wonders like the Natural History rooms, in which it is so fascinating to wander; no streets, shops, carriages; no postman, no neighbors, not a doorbell within the compass of the place. The best balanced human mind is prone to lose its elasticity and stagnate, in this isolation. One learns immediately the value of work to keep one's wits clear, cheerful, and steady; just as much real work of the body as it can bear without weariness being always beneficent, but here indispensable....No one can dream what a charm there is in taking care of pets, singing birds, plants, etc., with such advantages of solitude; how every leaf and bud and flower is pored over, and admired, and loved! A whole conservatory, flushed with azaleas, and brilliant with forests of camellias and every precious exotic that blooms, could not impart so much delight as I have known a single rose to give, unfolding in the bleak bitterness of a day in February, when this side of the planet seemed to have arrived at its culmination of hopelessness, with the Isles of Shoals the most hopeless spot upon its surface. One gets close to the heart of these things; they are almost precious as Picciola to the prisoner, and yield a fresh and constant joy such as the pleasure-

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seeking inhabitants of cities could not find in their whole round of shifting diversions. With a bright and cheerful interior, open fires, books and pictures, windows full of thrifty blossoming plants and climbing vines, a family of singing birds, plenty of work, and a clear head and quiet conscience, it would go hard if one could not be happy even in such loneliness. Books, of course, are inestimable. Nowhere does one follow a play of Shakespeare's with greater zest, for it brings the whole world, which you need, about you; doubly precious the deep thoughts which wise men have given to help us, doubly sweet the songs of all the poets, for nothing comes between to distract you."

It was not extraordinary that the joy of human intercourse, after such estrangement, became a rapture to so loving a nature as Celia Laighton's; nor that, very early, before the period of fully ripened womanhood, she should have been borne away from her island by a husband, a man of birth and education, who went as missionary to the wild fisher folk on the adjacent island called Star.

The exuberant joy of her unformed maidenhood, with its power of self-direction, attracted the shy, intellectual student nature of Mr. Thaxter. He could not dream that this careless, happy creature possessed the strength and sweep of wing which belonged to her own sea-gull. In good hope of teaching and developing her, of adding much in which she was uninstructed to the wisdom which the influences of nature and the natural affections had bred in her, he carried his wife to a quiet inland home, where three children were very soon born to them. Under the circumstances, it was not extraordinary that his ideas of education were not altogether successfully applied; she required more strength than she could summon, more

adaptability than many a grown woman could have found, to face the situation, and life became difficult and full of problems to them both. Their natures were strongly contrasted, but perhaps not too strongly to complement each other, if he had fallen in love with her as a woman, and not as a child. His retiring, scholarly nature and habits drew him away from the world; her overflowing, sun-loving being, like a solar system in itself, reached out on every side, rejoicing in all created things.

Her introduction to the world of letters was by means of her first poem, "Land-Locked," which, by the hand of a friend, was brought to the notice of James Russell Lowell, at that time editor of *The Atlantic*. He printed it at once, without exchanging a word with the author. She knew nothing about it until the magazine was laid before her. This recognition of her talent was a delight indeed, and it was one of the happiest incidents in a life which was already overclouded with difficulties and sorrow. It will not be out of place to reprint this poem here, because it must assure every reader of the pure poetic gift which was in her. In form, in movement, and in thought it is as beautiful as her latest work.

LAND-LOCKED

Black lie the hills; swiftly doth daylight flee;
And, catching gleams of sunset's dying smile,
Through the dusk land for many a changing mile
The river runneth softly to the sea.

O happy river, could I follow thee!
O yearning heart, that never can be still!
O wistful eyes, that watch the steadfast hill,
Longing for the level line of solemn sea!

THE HEAVENLY GUEST

Have patience; here are flowers and songs of birds,
Beauty and fragrance, wealth of sound and sight,
All summer's glory thine from morn till night,
And life too full of joy for uttered words.

Neither am I ungrateful; but I dream
Deliciously how twilight falls to-night
Over the glimmering water, how the light
Dies blissfully away, until I seem

To feel the wind, sea-scented, on my cheek,
To catch the sound of dusky, flapping sail,
And dip of oars, and voices on the gale
Afar off, calling low,—my name they speak!

O Earth! thy summer song of joy may soar
Ringing to heaven in triumph. I but crave
The sad, caressing murmur of the wave
That breaks in tender music on the shore.

With the growth of Mrs. Thaxter's children and the death of her father, the love and duty she owed her mother caused her to return in the winter to the Shoals, although a portion of the summer was passed there as well. This was her husband's wish; his sense of loyalty to age and his deep attachment to his own parents making it clear to his mind as the only right step for his wife to take.

But she had already tasted of the tree of knowledge, and the world outside beckoned to her with as fascinating a face as it ever presented to any human creature. It was during one of these returning visits to the Shoals that much of the delightful book from which I have quoted was written; a period when she had already learned something of the charms of society,—sufficient to accentuate her ap-



CELIA AT THE AGE OF TWENTY, HER SON
JOHN IN HER LAP AND KARL BESIDE HER.

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preciation of her own past, and to rejoice in what a larger life now held in store for her.

Lectures, operas, concerts, theatres, pictures, music above all,—what were they not to her! Did artists ever before find such an eye and such an ear? She brought to them a spirit prepared for harmony, but utterly ignorant of the science of painting or music until the light of art suddenly broke upon her womanhood. Of what this new world was to her we find some hints, of course, in her letters; but no human lips, not even her own exuberant power of expression, could ever say how her existence was enriched and made beautiful through music. Artists who sang to her, or those who rehearsed the finest music on the piano or violin or flute, or those who brought their pictures and put them before her while she listened, they alone, in a measure, understood what these things signified, and how she was lifted quite away by them from the ordinary level of life. They were inspired to do for her what they could seldom do for any other creature, and her generous response, overflowing, almost extravagant in expression, was never half enough to begin to tell the new life they brought to her. The following lines from a sonnet addressed to the tenor singer, W. J. Winch, a singer who has given much joy to his day and generation, will convey some idea of the deep feeling which his voice stirred in her:—

“Carry us captive, thou with strong heart
And the clear head, and nature sweet and sound!
Most willing captives we to thy great art.

* * * * *

Sing, and we ask no greater joy than this.
Only to listen, thrilling to the song.

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* * * * *

Borne skyward where the winged hosts rejoice."

Mrs. Thaxter found herself, as the years went on, the centre of a company who rather selected themselves than were selected from the vast number of persons who frequented her brother's "house of entertainment" at the islands. Her "parlor," as it was called, was a milieu quite as interesting as any of the "salons" of the past. Her pronounced individuality forbade the intrusion even of a fancy of comparison with anything else, and equally forbade the possibility of rivalry. There was only one thought in the mind of the frequenters of her parlor,—that of gratitude for the pleasure and opportunity she gave them, and a genuine wish to please her and to become her friends. She possessed the keen instincts of a child with regard to people. If they were unlovable to her, if they were for any reason unsympathetic, nothing could bring her to overcome her dislike. She was in this particular more like some wild thing than a creature of the nineteenth century; indeed, one of her marked traits was a curious intractability of nature. I believe that no worldly motive ever influenced her relation with any human creature. Of course these native qualities made her more ardently devoted in her friendships; but it went hardly with her to ingratiate those persons for whom she felt a natural repulsion, or even sometimes to be gentle with them. Later in life she learned to call no man "common or unclean;" but coming into the world, as she did, full grown, like Minerva in the legend, with keen eyes, and every sense alive to discern pretension, untruth, ungodliness in guise of the church, and all the uncleanness of the earth, these things were as much a surprise to her as it was, on the

other hand, to find the wondrous world of art and the lives of the saints. Perhaps no large social success was ever achieved upon such unworldly conditions; she swung as free as possible of the world of society and its opinions, forming a centre of her own, built up on the sure foundations of love and loyalty. She saw as much as any woman of the time of large numbers of people, and she was able to give them the best kind of social enjoyment: music, pictures, poetry, and conversation; the latter sometimes poor and sometimes good, according to the drift which swept through her beautiful room. Mrs. Thaxter was generous in giving invitations to her parlor, but to its frequenters she said, "If people do not enjoy what they find, they must go their way: my work and the music will not cease." The study of nature and art was always going forward either on or around her work-table. The keynote of conversation was struck there for those who were able to hear it. We were reminded of William Blake's verse:—

"I give you the end of a golden string.
Only wind it into a ball.
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate.
Built in Jerusalem wall."

Here it was that Whittier could be heard at his best, sympathetic, stimulating, up-lifting, as he alone could be, and yet as he, with his Quaker training to silence, was so seldom moved to prove himself. Here he would sit near her hour after hour; sometimes mending her aeolian harp while they talked together, sometimes reading aloud to the assembled company. Here was Rose Lamb, artist and dear friend, and here Mrs. Mary Hemenway was a most beloved presence, with her eager enthusiasm for reform.

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yet with a modesty of bearing which made young and old press to her side. She loved Celia Thaxter, who in her turn was deeply and reverently attached to Mrs. Hemer-way.

The early affection of both Mr. Thaxter and his wife for William Morris Hunt grew to be the love of a life-time. Hunt's grace, versatility, and charm, not to speak of his undoubted genius, exerted their combined fascination over these appreciative friends in common with the rest of his art-loving contemporaries; but to these two, each in their several ways, Hunt felt himself equally attracted. and the last sad summer of his life he gladly turned to Celia Thaxter in her island home as a sure refuge in time of trouble. It was she who watched him day by day, listening to his words which came clothed with a kind of inspiration. "Whatever genius may be," said Tom Appleton, "we all feel that William Hunt had it. His going is the extinction of a great light: a fervent hand is cold; and the warmth which glowed through so many friends and disciples is like a trodden ember extinguished." It was Celia Thaxter's hurrying footsteps which traced her friend to the spot where, in extreme weakness, he fell in death. She wrote, "It was that pretty lake where my wild roses had been blooming all summer, and where the birds dipped and sang at sunrise."

Her gratitude to the men and women who brought music to her door knew no limit; it was strong, deep, and unforgetting. "What can I ever do for them," she would say, "when I remember the joy they bring me!"

Julius Eichberg was one of the earliest friends who ministered in this way to her happiness. Her letters overflow with the descriptions of programmes for the day.

when Mr. Paine and Mr. Eichberg would play together or alone, during long mornings and afternoons. "I am lost in bliss," she wrote; "every morning, afternoon, and evening Beethoven! I am emerging out of all my clouds by help of it; it is divine!"

And again, writing of Mr. Paine in his own home, she said: "I am in the midst of the awful and thrilling music of the *OEdipus Tyrannus*, and it curdles my blood; we are all steeped in it, for J. K. P. goes on and on composing it all the time, and the tremendous chords thrill the very timbers of the house. It is most interesting!"

Of Arthur Whiting, too, and his wife, whose musical gifts she placed among the first, she frequently wrote and spoke with loving appreciation. These friendships were a never failing source of gladness to her.

Later in life came Mr. William Mason, who was the chief minister to her joy in music, her enlightener, her consoler, to the end. Those who loved her best must always give him the tribute of their admiration and grateful regard. Mr. Mason must have known her keen gratitude, for who understood better than he the feeling by which she was lifted away from the things of this world by the power of music!

"The dignity of labor" is a phrase we have often heard repeated in modern life, but it was one unnecessary to be spoken by Celia Thaxter. It may easily be said of her that one of the finest lessons she unconsciously taught was not only the value of labor, but the joy of doing things well. The necessities of her position, as I have already indicated, demanded a great deal, but she responded to the need with a readiness and generosity great enough to ex-

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tort admiration from those who knew her. How much she contributed to the comfort of the lives of those she loved at the Shoals we have endeavored to show; how beautiful her garden was there, in the summer, all the world could see; but at one period there was also a farm at Kittery Point, to be made beautiful and comfortable by her industry, where one of her sons still lives; and a *pied a terre* in Boston or in Portsmouth, whither she came in the winter with her eldest son, who was especially dependent upon her love and care; and all these changes demanded much of her time and strength.

She was certainly one of the busiest women in the world. Writing from Kittery Point, September 6, 1880, she says: "It is divinely lovely here, and the house is charming. I have brought a servant over from the hotel, and it is a blessing to be able to make them all comfortable; to set them down in the charming dining-room overlooking the smooth, curved crescent of sandy beach, with the long rollers breaking white, and the Shoals looming on the far sea-line....But oh, how tired we all get! I shall be quite ready for my rest! Your weariest, loving C. T." This note gives a picture of her life. She was always helping to make a bright spot around her; to give of herself in some way. There is a bit in her book which illustrates this instinct. The incident occurred during a long, dreary storm at the Shoals. Two men had come in a boat, asking for help. "A little child had died at Star Island, and they could not sail to the mainland, and had no means to construct a coffin among themselves. All day I watched the making of that little chrysalis; and at night the last nail was driven in, and it lay across a bench, in the midst of the litter of the workshop, and a curious stillness seemed to emanate from the senseless boards. I went back to the house and

gathered a handful of scarlet geranium, and returned with it through the rain. The brilliant blossoms were sprinkled with glittering drops. I laid them in the little coffin, while the wind wailed so sorrowfully outside, and the rain poured against the windows. Two men came through the mist and storm and one swung the light little shell to his shoulder, and they carried it away, and the gathering darkness shut down and hid them as they tossed among the waves. I never saw the little girl, but where they buried her I know; the lighthouse shines close by, and every night the quiet, constant ray steals to her grave and softly touches it, as if to say, with a caress. 'Sleep well! Be thankful you are spared so much that I see humanity endure, fixed here forever where I stand.'"

We have seen the profound love she felt for, and the companionship she found in, nature and natural objects; but combined with these sentiments, or developed simply by her love to speak more directly, was a very uncommon power of observation. This power grew day by day, and the delightful correspondence which existed between Bradford Torrey and herself, although they had never met face to face, bears witness to her constant mental record and memory respecting the habits of birds and woodland manners. Every year we find her longing for larger knowledge; books and men of science attracted her; and if her life had been less intensely laborious, in order to make those who belonged to her comfortable and happy, what might she not have achieved! Her nature was replete with boundless possibilities, and we find ourselves asking the old, old question,—must the artist forever crush the wings by which he flies against such terrible

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limitations?—a question never to be answered in this world.

Her observations began with her earliest breath at the islands. “I remember,” she says, “in the spring, kneeling on the ground to seek the first blades of grass, that pricked through the soil, and bringing them into the house to study and wonder over. Better than a shopful of toys they were to me! Whence came their color? How did they draw their sweet, refreshing tint from the brown earth, or the limpid air, or the white light? Chemistry was not at hand to answer me, and all her wisdom would not have dispelled the wonder. Later, the little scarlet pimpernel charmed me. It seemed more than a flower; it was like a human thing. I knew it by its homely name of ‘poor man’s weather glass.’ It was so much wiser than I; for when the sky was yet without cloud, softly it clasped its small red petals together, folding its golden heart in safety from the shower that was sure to come. How could it know so much?”

Whatever sorrows life brought to her, and they were many and of the heaviest, this exquisite enjoyment of nature, the tender love and care for every created thing within her reach, always stayed her heart. To see her lift a flower in her fingers,—fingers which gave one a sense of supporting everything which she touched, expressive too of fineness in every fibre, although strong and worn with labor,—to see her handle these wonderful creatures which she worshiped, was something not to be forgotten. The lines of Keats,

“Open afresh your rounds of starry folds,
Ye ardent marigolds!”

were probably oftener flitting through her mind or from her lips than through the mind or from the lips of any

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since Keats wrote them. She remembered that he said he thought his “intensest pleasure in life had been to watch the growth of flowers,” but she was sure he never felt their beauty more devoutly “than the little half-savage being who knelt, like a fire-worshiper, to watch the unfolding of those golden disks.”

The time came at last, as it comes to every human being for asking the reason of the faith that was in her. It was difficult for her to reply. Her heart had often questioned whether she believed, and what; and yet as she has said, she could not keep her faith out of her poems if she would. We find the following passage in *Among the Isles of Shoals* which throws a light beyond that of her own lantern.

“When the boat was out late,” she says, “in soft, moonless summer nights, I used to light a lantern, and, going down to the water’s edge, take my station between the timbers of the slip, and, with the lantern at my feet. sit waiting in the darkness, quite content, knowing my little star was watched for, and that the safety of the boat depended in a great measure upon it....I felt so much a part of the Lord’s universe. I was no more afraid of the dark than the waves or winds: but I was glad to hear at last the creaking of the mast and the rattling of the rowlocks as the boat approached.”

“A part of the Lord’s universe,”—that Celia Thaxter always felt herself to be, and for many years she was impatient of other teaching than what nature brought to her. As life went on, and the mingled mysteries of human pain and grief were unfolded, she longed for a closer knowledge. At first she sought it everywhere, and patiently, save in or through the churches: with them she was long

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impatient. At last, after ardent search through the religious books and by means of the teachers of the Orient, the Bible was born anew for her, and the New Testament became her stay and refreshment. At this period she wrote to her friend, Mrs. H. M. Rogers: "K. and I read the Bhagavad Gitâ every day of our lives, and when we get to the end we begin again! It is a great thing to keep one's mind full of it, permeated as it were, and I think Mohini's own words are a great help and inspiration everywhere, all through it as well as in the beautiful introduction. I have written out clearly on the margin of my copy every text which he has quoted from the Scriptures, and find it most interesting. 'Truth is one.'"

Nothing was ever "born anew" in Celia Thaxter which she did not strive to share with others. She could keep nothing but secrets to herself. Joys, experiences of every kind, sorrows and misfortunes, except when they could darken the lives of others, were all brought, open-handed and open-hearted, to those she loved. Her generosity knew no limits.

There is a description by her of the flood which swept over her being, and seemed to carry her away from the earth, when she once saw the great glory of the Lord in a rainbow at the island. She hid her face from the wonder; it was more than she could bear. "I felt then," she said, "how I longed to speak these things which made life so sweet,—to speak the wind, the cloud, the bird's flight, the sea's murmur,—and ever the wish grew"; and so it was she became, growing from and with this wish, a poet the world will remember. Dr. Holmes said once in conversation that he thought the value of a poet to the world was not so much the pleasure that this or that

poem might give to certain readers, or even perchance to posterity, as the fact that a poet was known to be one who was sometimes rapt out of himself into the region of the Divine; that the spirit had descended upon him and taught him what he should speak.

This is especially true of Celia Thaxter, whose life was divorced from worldliness, while it was instinct with the keenest enjoyment of life and of God's world. She liked to read her poems aloud when people asked for them, and if there was ever a genuine reputation from doing a thing well, such a reputation was hers. From the first person who heard her, the wish began to spread, until, summer after summer, in her parlor, listeners would gather, if she would promise to read to them. Night after night she has held her sway, with tears and smiles from her responsive little audiences, which seemed to gain new courage and light from what she gave them. Her unspeakably interesting nature was always betraying itself and shining out between the lines. Occasionally, she yielded to the urgent claims brought to bear upon her by her friend Mrs. Johnson, of the Woman's prison, and would go to read to the sad-eyed audience at Sherborn. Even those hearts dulled by wrong and misery awakened at the sound of her voice. It was not altogether this or that verse or ballad that made the tears flow, or brought a laugh from her hearers; it was the deep sympathy which she carried in her heart and which poured out in her voice; a hope, too, for them, and for what they might yet become. She could not go frequently,—she was too deeply laden with responsibilities nearer home; but it was always a holiday when she was known to be coming, and a season

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of light-heartedness to Mrs. Johnson as well as to the prisoners.

It is a strange fallacy that a poet may not read verses well. Who beside the writer should comprehend every shade of meaning which made the cloud or sunshine of his poem? Mrs. Thaxter certainly read her own verse with a fullness of suggestion which no other reader could have given it; and her voice was sufficient, too, although not loud or striking, to fill and satisfy the ear of the listener. But at the risk of repetition we recall that it was her own generous, beautiful nature, unlike that of any other, which made her reading helpful to all who heard her. She speaks somewhere of the birds on her island as "so tame, knowing how well they are beloved, that they gather on the window-sills, twittering and fluttering, gay and graceful, turning their heads this way and that, eyeing you askance without a trace of fear." And so it was with the human beings who came to know her. They were attracted, they came near, they flew under her protection and were not disappointed of their rest.

Four years before Mrs. Thaxter left this world, when she was still only fifty-five years old, she was stricken with a shaft of death. Her overworked body was prostrated in sudden agony, and she, well, young, vigorous beyond the ordinary lot of mortals, found herself weak and unable to rise. "I do so hate figuring as an interesting invalid," she wrote. "Perhaps I have been doing too much, getting settled. But oh, I used to be able to do anything! Where is my old energy and vigor and power gone! It should not ebb away quite so soon!" She recovered her old tone and sufficient strength for everyday needs, and still found "life so interesting." But her keen observation

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had been brought to bear upon her own condition and she suspected that she might flit away from us quickly some day.

Except for one who was especially dependent upon her she was quite ready. The surprises of this life were so wonderful, it was easy for her to believe in the surprises of the unseen; but her letters were full as usual of things which feed the springs of joy around us in this world. One summer it was the first volume of poems of Richard Watson Gilder which gave her great happiness. She talked of them to her friends, and finally wrote to Mr. Gilder himself. Since her death he has said, "I never saw Mrs. Thaxter but once, and that lately; but her immediate and surprising and continuous appreciation and encouragement I can never forget." How many other contemporaneous writers and artists could say the same!

The transparent simplicity of her character and manners, her love and capacity for labor, were combined with equal capacities for enjoying the complex in others and a pure appetite for pleasure. It would be impossible to find a more childlike power of enjoyment.

A perfect happiness came to her, during the last eight years of her life, with the birth of her grandchildren. The little boy who surprised her into bliss one day by crying out, "I 'dore you, I 'dore you, granna! I love you every breff!" was the creature perhaps dearest to her heart; but she loved them all, and talked and wrote of them with abandonment of rejoicing. Writing to her friend Mrs. Rogers, she says: "Little E. stayed with his 'granna,' who worships the ground he walks on, and counted every beat of his quick-fluttering little heart. Oh, I never meant, in my old age, to become subject to the thrill of a love

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like this; it is almost dreadful, so absorbing, so stirring down to the deeps. For the tiny creature is so old and wise and sweet, and so fascinating in his sturdy common sense and clear intelligence; and his affection for me is a wonderful, exquisite thing, the sweetest flower that has bloomed for me in all my life through."

Her enjoyment of art could not fade nor lose its keenness. Her life had been shut, as we have seen, into very narrow limits. She never had seen the city of New York, and life outside the circle we have described was an unknown world to her. She went to Europe once with her eldest brother, when he was ill, for three months, and she has left in her letters (portions of which will be published in a forthcoming volume) some striking descriptions of what she saw there; but her days were closely bounded by the necessities we have suggested. Nevertheless the great world of art was more to Celia Thaxter than to others; perhaps for the very reason that her mind was open and unjaded. Her rapture over the great players from England; her absolute agony, after seeing "*The Cup*" played by them in London, lest she could never, never tell the happiness it was to her, with Tennyson's words on her own tongue, as it were, to follow Miss Terry's perfect enunciation of the lines,—these enjoyments, true pleasures as indeed they are, did not lose their power over her.

Gilbert and Sullivan, too, could not have found a more amused admirer. *Pinafore* never grew stale for her, and her brothers yielded to her fancy, or pleased it, by naming their little steamer *Pinafore*. She went to the theatre again and again to see this, and all the succeeding comedies by the same hands. She never seemed to weary of their fun.

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But the poets were her great fountain of refreshment; “Siloa’s Brook” was her chief resort. Tennyson was her chosen master, and there were few of his lines she did not know by heart. Her feeling for nature was satisfied by the incomparable verses in which he portrays the divine light shining behind the life of natural things. How often have we heard her murmuring to herself,

“The wind sounds like a silver wire,”

or,

“To watch the emerald-colored water falling.”

or,

“Black as ash-buds on the front of March.”

Whatever it might be she was observing, there was some line of this great interpreter of nature ready to make the moment melodious. Shakespeare’s sonnets were also close companions; indeed, she seized and retained a cloud of beautiful things in her trustworthy memory. They fed and cheered her on her singing way.

In the quiet loveliness of early summer, and before the tide of humanity swept down upon Appledore, she went for the last time, in June, 1894, with a small company of intimate friends, to revisit the different islands and the well-known haunts most dear to her. The days were still and sweet, and she lingered lovingly over the old places, telling the local incidents which occurred to her, and touching the whole with a fresh light. Perhaps she knew that it was a farewell; but if it had been revealed to her, she could not have been more tender and loving in her spirit to the life around her.

How suddenly it seemed at last that her days with us were ended! She had been listening to music, had been reading to her little company, had been delighting in one

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of Appleton Brown's new pictures, and then she laid her down to sleep for the last time, and flitted away from her mortality.

The burial was at her island, on a quiet afternoon in late summer. Her parlor, in which the body lay, was again made radiant, after her own custom, with the flowers from her garden and a bed of sweet bay was prepared by her friends Appleton Brown and Childe Hassam, on which her form was laid.

William Mason once more played the music from Schumann which she chiefly loved and an old friend, James De Normandie, paid a brief tribute of affection, spoken for all those who surrounded her. She was borne by her brothers and those nearest to her up to the silent spot where her body was left.

The day was still and soft, and the veiled sun was declining as the solemn procession, bearing flowers, followed to the sacred place. At a respectful distance above stood a wide ring of interested observers, but only those who knew her and loved her best drew near. After all was done, and the body was at rest upon a fragrant bed prepared for it, the young flower-bearers brought their burdens to cover her. The bright, tear-stained faces of those who held up their arms full of flowers, to be heaped upon the spot until it became a mound of blossoms, allied the scene, in beauty and simplicity, to the solemn rites of antiquity.

It was indeed a poet's burial, but it was far more than that: it was the celebration of the passing of a large and beneficent soul.

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MRS. LARZ ANDERSON

CELIA THAXTER AND HER GARDENS

By Mrs. Larz Anderson.

Mrs. Emma M. Anderson who was for eight seasons at the Isles of Shoals under the Laighton management has written a booklet on Celia Thaxter and her garden. *The Herald* is permitted by the authoress to publish the following:

"One goes to sleep in the muffled roar of the storm and wakes to find it still raging in senseless fury." Such was the lullaby of Celia Laighton Thaxter's childhood.

She was born in June, 1835, and died in August, 1894. Her father, a man of most determined will, decided to withdraw himself forever from the world, because of some personal disappointment which frustrated his hope of a public career.

Celia was five years old when he accepted the charge of the White Island Light House on the Isles of Shoals nine miles from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, which was the nearest point of mainland.

Mr. Laighton's family consisted of a wife, two sons and a daughter. The mother, with a heart stayed unflinchingly upon love and obedience, seems to have followed him without a murmur, leaving every dear association of the past as though it had not been.

All honor to her memory! For she taught the native inhabitants of the island the arts of carding wool, spinning, weaving, knitting, sewing, braiding mats, etc., and instead of becoming a slave to circumstances, she rose to

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be a veritable queen among the islanders, and their "children's children have risen up to call her blessed!"

Who can record such a strange childhood as the little Celia passed in this lonely spot!

White Island is one of nine rocky islands, rising apparently out of mid-ocean. Landing here for the first time one is struck by the loneliness of the place. Nothing but sky and raging seas, dashing over the mighty rocks. Who shall describe the wonderful noise of the surf!

Mrs. Thaxter says: "To me it is the most suggestive of all the sounds of nature."

The only excitement of a long, stormy winter, and the only communication with the mainland, was the occasional landing of a schooner, with lighthouse supplies, letters, books, papers, and magazines. Remember, the Laughtons were as a family, cultivated, intellectual and artistic.

Again, Mrs. Thaxter says, "Here we are imprisoned as completely as if we were in the Bastille, with twenty weeks of bluster between us and spring." "I keep busy all the time," she writes. "In the first place, one hour every day over the ten windows full of plants, a passion flower is running around the top at the rate of seven knots an hour, roses, geraniums, clouds of pinks and oxalis."

In one of the pauses of her work she looks out of the window at the interminable wet and stormy weather. There is no chance of it clearing and she exclaims, "O everlasting, beautiful old eternal slop."

Nevertheless, she loved the old lighthouse home, with its low, whitewashed ceilings and deep window seats, showing the thickness of the walls, made to withstand the breakers.

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Of course, Captain Kidd is supposed to have made this locality one of his many hiding places, and Celia's brothers, Cedric and Oscar Laighton, spent hours in seeking imaginary treasures. Evidences of wrecks and echoes of disaster pervaded their earliest memory, and Celia's imagination was doubtless stimulated far beyond that of most children.

There were no visitors to break the solitude of the island, except that once in a while, when someone was sick, neighbors came from Star Island for milk or medicines, or if anyone died to have a coffin made. There is one picture she recalls when she stood all day in a drizzling northeast rain watching two men construct a coffin for a little child who had died on one of the islands. When the last nail was driven she ran to the lighthouse and gathered some geraniums and placed them in the coffin as the men carried it away.

From her diary one can picture her grief over the destruction of her beloved friends, the birds, as they beat themselves to death against the glass panes of the lighthouse, while seeking shelter from a thunderstorm. And one can see the sorrowful little maid in the early morning, gathering these lifeless creatures into her pinafore until it was brimful of dead sparrows, swallows, thrushes, fly catchers, robins, warblers, scarlet tanagers, and golden orioles, "enough to break the heart of a small child to think of."

Another cheerful pastime of hers was the conversing with a skull which she found on the island, polished and whitened by time. She says, "Many and many a question I put to the silent casket which had held a human soul."

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Would you call this the higher education for a girl nowadays?

So time went on, and we see her maturing into beautiful womanhood, not in the least morbid or saddened by her strange, lonely life. As her artistic temperament had cravings, many a summer morning at dawn one might have seen her creeping quietly out of the still house and climbing to the high cliff called "The Head," to see the sunrise. There, nestled in a crevice on the cliff's edge, she watched the "shadows draw away and the morning break." On some of those matchless summer mornings, when she went out to milk the little dun cow, it was hardly possible to go farther than the doorstep for pure wonder, as she looked abroad at the sea, lying still like a vast round mirror, not a sound except a few birds' voices. Of her conversations with these early risers, she says, "The loons congregate in Spring and Autumn. These birds seem to me the most human, and at the same time, the most demoniac of their kind. I learned to imitate their different cries, and at one time the loon language was so familiar that I could almost always summon a considerable flock by going down to the water and assuming the neighborly conversational tone which they generally used. After a few minutes half a dozen birds would come sailing in, and it was the most delightful little party imaginable, for you know their laugh is very comical, unless a storm should be approaching, then their wild, melancholy cry is the most awful note I ever heard from a bird."

When about seventeen, Celia Laighton married a man many years her senior, Professor Thaxter. He was a man of birth and education, a devoted follower of Browning and a profound student. He was the only teacher Mr.

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Laighton ever had for his children in their home on White Island, and it is not strange that, as he watched Celia's beautiful personality and unusual mind expand, he should have fallen in love with her, while he being the only young man of her own class she had ever met, should appeal both to her heart and intellect; so after a brief courtship, she accepted him "for better or for worse."

He took his bride to a small New England village, where her husband supplemented their scanty income by giving readings of the Brownings. She learned many hard lessons, while trials and perplexities beset her path. She says in her journal, "I am so blue sometimes; let me whisper in your kind ear, that I feel as if I bore the car of Juggernaut upon my back day after day. I am too much alone, and I get sadder than death with brooding over this riddle of life. My little John and Karl have grand times out of doors, and get dirtier than a whole dictionary can express. I do my own washing, and oh, for patience!"

When her father died, her brothers built two large hotels, one on Appledore, the other on Star Island. They also built a charming cottage for their mother and sister, which Mrs. Thaxter occupied until she died.

Celia Thaxter's knowledge of flowers was one of her best known characteristics, and the trouble she took to make her garden on that rocky bed may well encourage some of us in our efforts at floriculture.

How can I ever describe this wonderful patch of color? I have not Ross Turner's brush, nor one of his pictures to show you. At first, the garden was started entirely for pleasure, but in after years it became quite a source of revenue, as the hotel guests gladly availed them-

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selves of the privilege to possess the lovely corsage bouquets arranged by her own hands. How did she do it? First of all, soil must be brought to this rocky shore by boat from the mainland, nine miles distant. If the seeds were put in the ground when we generally plant ours, the stormy winds would beat to destruction the tiny things, the moment they responded to their natural time of germination. So she had to solve this problem for herself. All through the winter, the members of her family, her cook, her friends, had instructions to gently remove the top of their eggs instead of improperly breaking them in half, as most of us do, and to save the shells for her. By early spring she had quite a collection of eggshells. Into these dainty flower pots she put sand and soil, hiding in each a few seeds, and then placed them upright in old strawberry crates filled with sawdust. Thus she was enabled to transport them from her winter home, Portsmouth, and put them, shell and all into the soil prepared and brought from the mainland for them on the barren island, cleverly stealing a march upon tempestuous dame Nature who presides over this region. When germination began, weeds also appeared, so a warfare had to be waged against them every day.

She seems to have retained her childish habit of early rising. "I am always up at four o'clock," she writes, "and I hear everything every bird has to say on any subject whatever." After a cold bath, she would wrap herself in warm flannels as a precaution against the heavy dews, preparatory to making her attack upon the army of weeds. Instead of breaking her back over this unpopular garden work, and becoming weary before any visible headway was made, she would spread a rubber blanket on the ground

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and recline upon her left side, using her right hand to exterminate the enemies. She always stopped in time to put on one of her dainty white muslins or soft gray cashmeres, so becoming to her rosy complexion and silver hair, and to meet the family at breakfast all aglow from the outdoor exercise. Let us name some of the members of this happy household who were her guests. Whittier, Lowell, Emerson, Holmes, John Fiske, William Hunt, Ross Turner, J. Appleton Brown, Childe Hassam, also William Mason and John K. Payne, both so generous with their music; Sara Orne Jewett, Annie Fields, Clements, and many other treasured names could be added to this list.

There may be those who still recall the weird evenings in her cottage, when by the light of a shaded candle and the dying embers of a wood fire upon the hearth, she would read, if urgently requested, some of her own poems, perhaps a thrilling account of "A Wreck," or "The Story of a Blood Curdling Murder." How great a contrast with the morning scene in her long parlor, fairly ablaze with flowers cut from her own garden, and arranged, each wonderful variety by itself, in the quaintest and daintiest of crystal vases. Often have I counted as many as one hundred and fifty different flowers, each carrying out its habit of growth in the manner and height of its arrangement. You were not supposed to go up and speak to Mrs. Thaxter when you entered, as she was always busy with her sketching, illustrating her books printed on water color paper, which were often sold for fifty dollars before she could finish them. The guests slipped quietly into a cushioned window seat, or an old-fashioned chair, and were soon lost in admiration of some new picture placed upon the easel by the artist for Mrs. Thaxter's criticism,

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and with the privilege of purchase by the guests. Meanwhile William Mason or John K. Payne would be transporting us into musical heights with Schumann, Bach, Beethoven, Grieg, Wagner, and others. Many poets and writers were first discovered in this drawing room or salon, as it was called.

This life was a wonderful and happy contrast to her former one. She writes in a letter to Whittier, "Sometimes I wonder if it is wise or well to love any spot on this old earth so intensely as I do this. I am wrapped in measureless content as I sit on the steps leading to my garden, where the freshly turned earth is odorous of the spring." Tennyson was her chosen master, and there were few of his poems with which she was not familiar. Whatever she might be observing, in nature, there was always some line of his running through her mind to give expression to her thought, and yet she had her own individual style, not in the least like his, as one will see in reading her verses.

Her life at this time was full of fine and beautiful things, and through her poems she gave expression to the depth and tenderness of her inner nature. There came a time, however, when this bright outlook faded, and her hold upon the old truths, which had so long upheld her loosened.

While in this drifting state of mind, there entered into her life the Hindu, Mohini, Mohun Chattergi. His teachings, some of which I quote, gradually gave her renewed peace and happiness.

"In my country," said Mohini, "we speak of the scriptures as our mother. They take a man up where he is and leave him on a higher plane every time he studies them."

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"Interior illumination or faith is the only way by which to discover the Divinity."

"The Knowledge of God is in the interior life that grows on a man, not what he does. To wish to do able things, no matter how simple, for the glory of God, so as to be more and more colored by the Deity."

"God is independent of nature. Nature is not independent of God."

"The material body is not man, until God puts into him something to reflect the Deity."

Mrs. Thaxter's thought of life was very comprehensive. She used often to say to those about her, "I do not mind the thought of death, it only means a fuller life." To the "fuller life" she awakened one early autumnal morning. One can almost see the wonder in her beautiful blue eyes as its glory broke upon her.

Her burial was a veritable sacrament, with only members of her family, and a few intimate friends in attendance. The solemn procession wended its way from her well loved cottage chanting her favorite psalm, and carrying to its last resting place—a rocky mound on the island—the remains of its beautiful benefactress, Celia Laighton Thaxter.

EMMA M. ANDERSON

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GIRLHOOD MEMORIES of CELIA THAXTER

By Maud Appleton McDowell

It blossomed by the summer sea
A tiny space of tangled bloom
Wherein so many flowers found room
A miracle it seemed to be.

And tall blue larkspur waved its spikes
Against the sea's deep violet
That every breeze makes deeper yet
With splendid azure where it strikes.

(From *MY GARDEN* by Celia Thaxter)

It was my privilege as a young girl to be for several summers in the cottage of Celia Thaxter the poet, on Appledore, one of the Isles of Shoals, a group nine miles out to sea, off Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

The hotel on Appledore, one of the largest of these six or seven isles, was owned and run by Mrs. Thaxter's two brothers, Oscar and Cedric Laighton, two hearty and genial hosts unspoiled by over-much contact with the mainland.

Those familiar with Celia Thaxter's life will remember the curiously simple upbringing of Miss Laighton and her brothers. Their father, a disappointed politician, vowing that he would never again step on mainland and taking his family with him, retired to one of the Isles of Shoals where he remained until he died. Celia Laighton lived there until she was seventeen when she met and

MAUD APPLETON McDOWELL

married Mr. Thaxter, making her home in Boston and elsewhere and soon developing her love of writing and more especially of verse.

So much has been told and written of her life that I will not dwell on it here.

I went first with my father and mother in 1890 to Hotel Appledore, which was much like any other summer hotel, but I was soon taken by our dear mutual friend, J. Appleton Brown, the painter, to Mrs. Thaxter's cottage, where she held a sort of salon mornings and evenings.

I shall never forget my feeling of awe when I first went into her room, one of the most beautiful I have ever seen, a large living room with windows on three sides, looking out over her garden and the blue sea beyond. It was in her own words

“The quiet room, the flowers, the perfumed calm
The slender crystal vase where all aflame
The scarlet poppies stand erect and tall.
Color that burns as if no frost could tame.
The shaded lamplight glowing over all.
The summer night a dream of warmth and balm.”

The walls were hung with pictures and sketches given her by the many artists who had painted there—Childe Hassam, J. Appleton Brown, Ross Turner and others. But perhaps the glory of the room was her arrangement of flowers at one end—the “Altar,” as we called it—where she had banked masses of flowers in dozens of vases of all sizes. I remember one day counting one hundred and ten. There were blue delphinium of all shades, red and yellow poppies, white and pink phlox, hollyhocks of different colors, bachelor’s buttons, and all the flowers in

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old-fashioned gardens. The effect she achieved was marvelous and cannot be described in words, for it was unlike any other flower arrangement I have ever seen.

It was not by chance that she had accomplished this glorious color scheme, for she worked over it for hours each day, putting a touch here and another there, almost as one would paint a picture, or compose a sonata. In fact, she said to one of the musicians who was there, J. K. Paine, Professor of Music at Harvard, "Johnny, don't you think there should be a deep note here?" When I asked her how she did it all she said, "My dear, it means the work of a ploughman. I get up at five in the morning and pick my flowers; and then, with the help of my faithful maid, who fills the many vases for me, I begin to arrange, changing vases many times until I get just the effect I want." She came down to the island in late May or early June; for she planted seeds in boxes in her winter home in Portsmouth, some so tiny she even grew them at the start in an eggshell and then, later, carried all these slips and baby plants nine miles out to sea to put in her island-garden at "Appledore."

Her garden, too, was unlike any other garden, although more beautiful, perhaps, than the more conventional gardens I have seen lately; for it was planted all helter-skelter, just bursts of color here and there,—and what color! I have been told that the sea-air makes the color of flowers more vivid than they appear in inland gardens. Certainly, it was so in this garden. When I spoke of the tangled mass of flowers she said, "Yes, I plant my garden to pick, not for show. They are just to supply my vases in this room."

Besides the "Altar," where all her flowers were mostly

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massed, there was the “Throne,” as we called it, where she sat or half reclined, for at that time she was not very strong. It was a long, rather low, sofa or divan covered with a greyish material, as I remember, and she herself was always in very light grey or white dresses, usually made simply and according to her own style, not changing with the prevailing fashions. She nearly always wore a soft white kerchief fastened with an old-fashioned brooch. Her hair was very white, her eyes very blue and her cheeks very pink; and she had an adorable smile which lighted up her whole face when she greeted you. I fell in love with her at once, of course, and nearly died of joy when, the second day after my meeting her, she said, “Child, I like you! You may come and stay here in my cottage,—I believe there is one empty room left.”

So I was moved over from the hotel to her cottage where she had ten or twelve “paying guests,” nearly all painters or musicians—such a company. Beside the above mentioned artists there were William Mason, the pianist, Julius Eichberg, the 'cellist, William Winch, the tenor, Clara Doris Rogers, former opera singer, and the writer, Anna Eichberg King, who later became the wife of John Lane of Bodley Head, London. I felt I was truly among the “Immortals.”

Each morning at eleven we would rush for the best seats on sofa or chairs facing the piano and listen to divine music—piano, string or voice—and often impromptu ensemble playing. Usually a different composer was taken each morning; one day all Beethoven or Bach, another all Schubert or Schumann, Brahms or Wagner.

What concerts we had and how like boys they all were! Just enjoying their holidays and “making music”

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when they wished and playing what they wanted. And in such an atmosphere of beauty! Something to appeal to the eye and ear and even the sense of smell, with the scent of the honeysuckle coming in through the many windows.

Then in the evenings we had reading aloud or recitations by her or by some of the literary guests. The room was dim and mysterious, lighted only by a lamp on the piano or by her side. She would read us weird stories, or the adventures of the early settlers on the islands. In fact, one evening she took a party of us sailing to "Smutty Nose Island," where a famous murder had been committed and there by the very cave where the deed was done, read aloud her story of "The Murder on Smutty Nose Island."

Those were truly golden days for me and I have cherished their memory ever since.

MAUD APPLETON McDOWELL

DOMESTICANA

By A Visitor to the Blessed Isles

LIFE AT A SUMMER SALON ON APPLIEDORE.

If anyone who has set sail for the Isles of Shoals should arrive at Appledore at five or half-past five o'clock upon a summer morning his welcome would be such a view of sea and land, such a freshness of bloom and a brightness of dashing breakers, such cheerfulness of solitude and exhilaration of loneliness with nature that he would count the day blessed which had this beginning. The great crowd in the summer hotel would not be met at the early morning hour, and all the obtrusiveness of a throng of people would not be encountered. It is likely that the visitor might pass from one end of the island to the other and would be able to take a prolonged view of Star and Smutty Nose, with other islands, and pick a large bouquet of wild roses upon his return without coming upon another intruder, the few fishermen who might be in his way seeming to be as natural to the place as the song sparrows or the sandpipers. But if, attracted by a brilliant patch of color in front of one of the cottages, he should go near to look at this wild mass of cultivated flowers, he would find that he had not been alone in his appreciation of early morning charm and freshness.

Mrs. Celia Thaxter, the poet of the islands, looks like the very "goddess," as she has been often called, when occupied in her regular morning occupation of gathering

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flowers from the famous little garden. Dressed in white, with a thin white sash crossing over her bosom, her face and figure express the abundance of health which the pure air is warranted to bestow. Her tender watchfulness over the flowers, and her really affectionate manner of gathering them, do not need the explanation of her words, "Oh, I love the flowers! Other people exclaim over them and say, 'Aren't they lovely?' but I feel about them differently, and the flowers know that I love them."

In all of Mrs. Thaxter's companies the opening subject of conversation is not the conventional topic, "the weather," but the more varied theme of flowers. She tells how she came to Appledore in March so that the garden might be prepared under her direction; how she planted all the seeds in boxes, and then transplanted the young plants into the small patches of ground in front of her cottage; until they were brought to wonderful perfection by the salt air and sun. Hollyhocks and sweet peas rise high over the fence; nasturtiums are banked up in yellow, orange and crimson upon the water-side; poppies of marvelous red and purple and white, coreopsis yellow and white, morning glories and other familiar flowers grow luxuriantly making a "quaint little wilderness of flowers, straggling hither and thither—"

One stormy night not long ago there came a cry of distress from the garden, and Mrs. Thaxter's knowledge of birds recognized the sandpiper's note. Without waiting for morning and scantily clad, she went at once to the little bird's assistance. Often at the hour of midnight she has gone out of doors to help some suffering songster. Birds are only less dear to her than flowers, and the island might be called a paradise for birds, since they are en-

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couraged and cared for as much as possible. "We look out for the birds here," Mrs. Thaxter says. "Often little sandpipers will come into my garden and fly across like a fuzz of mist. People have often noticed how tame all the birds on the island seem." On the frame of one of the pictures in Mrs. Thaxter's room, a pair of little swallow's wings is attached with the explanation that the little dead swallow was found in the garden. The description is made necessary, because as Vice-President of the Audubon Society, the hostess would not be considered guilty of displaying the feathers of a bird destroyed by man's cruelty.

Birds and flowers, music, art and poetry make the atmosphere of Mrs. Thaxter's salon. As her parlor has been enlarged during the year, she is able to entertain a greater number of visitors than ever before, and mornings and evenings favored guests from the cottages and hotel enjoy conversation and music of the most refreshing and inspiring kind. The room itself is a fitting framework for musicales and conversations. With walls literally covered with pictures and hung this season with new flower pieces by Ellen Robbins and Ross Turner, with the desk of the poet in one corner and her table filled with materials for china and water-color painting at a window, with flowers banked upon the mantel-piece and in jars and vases upon tables and shelves, with books and bric-a-brac, music and open piano, it is as pleasant a summer parlor as one could wish.

It is a subject of satisfaction with Mrs. Thaxter's visitors at her morning and evening receptions that there has been a great deal of music in her parlor this season. Mr. William Mason has been generous in giving many hours of musical enjoyment to the guests. "Oh, do go on!

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We are cormorants," Mrs. Thaxter says to the musician encouragingly, while she sits at her window painting a design of olives upon a white jar. Mr. Arthur Whiting has supplied much good music for entertainment. Mr. Julius Eichberg, an annual visitor to Appledore, is a valued musical member of the group at the Thaxter cottage, and Miss Henrietta Dana supplies a more lively measure with her guitar, accompanying songs in negro dialect. On rare occasions, the hostess entertains her guests by reading from her own poems and even more vividly brings close to the heart of her listeners the charm, the poetry and the tragedy of the life of islanders. I remember this verse was acclaimed.

"Upon the sadness of the sea
The sunset broods regretfully:
From the far lonely spaces, slow
Withdraws the wistful afterglow.

So out of life the splendor dies;
So darken all the happy skies;
So gathers twilight, cold and stern:
But overhead the planets burn.

And up the east another day
Shall chase the bitter dark away;
What though our eyes with tears be wet?
The sunrise never failed us yet.

The blush of dawn may yet restore
Our light and hope and joy once more.
Sad soul, take comfort, nor forget
That sunrise never failed us yet!"

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The early morning visitor to the Isles of Shoals feels no regret at having lingered among the delights of this summer salon. For many years the group of musicians, artists, literary people and their friends have made a famous circle at Appledore. Although many features are similar to a winter drawing room, the surroundings give a peculiar charm to the place, and the hostess makes the needed force to hold and attract the different visitors. Since practical America has not too many salons for the cultivation of the higher things, it is pleasant to think of the long time appreciation of poetry and art of Appledore.

A VISITOR

CELIA THAXTER

THE GENIUS OF THE ISLES OF SHOALS

(*Correspondence of the Chicago Tribune*)

Truest, because most loving of all the poets of the Isles, is Celia Thaxter, the child of the sea, the gray rock's own nursling, cradled almost among the billows, and hearing ever resounding in her ears the ceaseless lullaby of the ocean. How, as a child of five years of age, she went, with her father, and mother, and brothers, to the lonely isle, and lived and loved its every rock and flower, and bird, and insect, and watched every cloud and shadow on the sea, and sail, and cliff, and day by day yearned and longed, and durst not venture to utter in words the wonderful thoughts which stirred within her soul, she herself has given us glimpses in her delightful book, *Among the Isles of Shoals*, and in her poems. It is marvelous, the minute, painstaking affection with which the lonely girl studied and watched the scanty, as most of us would call it, life—vegetable, and animal, and human—around her: how each bit of moss, the little sandpiper on the beach, the floating spar, became to her a rich storehouse of visions and phantasms; and also how she noted every peculiarity of crag, and coast, and fish, and bird, and beast,—cultivating a power of faithful observation such as many of the most book-and-society-taught students lack and would give much to possess. Perhaps the best known of her poems is the “Sandpiper,” which is taught in the schools from Maine to Oregon.

THE SANDPIPER

Across the narrow beach we flit,
One little sandpiper and I,
And fast I gather, bit by bit,
The scattered driftwood bleached and dry.
The wild waves reach their hands for it,
The wild wind raves, the tide runs high,
As up and down the beach we flit.—
One little sandpiper and I.

Above our heads the sullen clouds
Scud black and swift across the sky;
Like silent ghosts in misty shrouds
Stand out the white lighthouses high.
Almost as far as eye can reach
I see the close-reefed vessels fly,
As fast we flit along the beach,—
One little sandpiper and I.

I watch him as he skims along,
Uttering his sweet and mournful cry.
He starts not at my fitful song,
Or flash of fluttering drapery.
He has no thought of any wrong;
He scans me with a fearless eye.
Staunch friends are we, well tried and strong,
The little sandpiper and I.

Comrade, where wilt thou be to-night
When the loosed storm breaks furiously?
My driftwood fire will burn so bright!
To what warm shelter canst thou fly?
I do not fear for thee, though wroth
The tempest rushes through the sky;
For are we not God's children both,
Thou, little sandpiper, and I?

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It interests me much now to recall my first sight of Celia Thaxter, before she had become known to fame, and while she still lived comparatively unknown at Appledore. We were spending a week—a party of merry young people, cousins and friends—at the Appledore house, then kept by Mrs. Thaxter's father, Mr. Laighton,—now by her two brothers. The father's history was interesting, and the subject of much speculation to the loungers about the hotel verandas and halls. He was a disappointed politician, and, disgusted with the thanklessness of the people, had fled the world and tried to live in solitude. But somehow, though he would not go to the mainland, the mainland had come to him,—will or nill nobody knew which,—he had found himself the center of a throng of summer visitors. “We girls,” however, cared not so much about the politician father's mental struggles as for the romance of his daughter,—the very young woman with the babies, whom we saw tilting about, in fearless fashion, in her little boat, among the breakers; or weeding her garden, and picking vegetables, and doing homely household duties, at the cottage above the hotel. “Only to think of it!” exclaimed dainty Miss Aristocrat of Beacon Street, Boston. “Mr. Thaxter, her husband, is a Harvard graduate, and, they say, is ‘cultivated’ and polished, and might have married in his own or the first circles. But he is so dreadfully eccentric, and he came down here, and fell in love with that rough girl, and I dare say he'll be as coarse as she is, some day.” And we all shook our heads, and sighed at the perversities and eccentricities of Harvard students, and went on with our embroidery, and crocheting, and gossipings, until our week's trip was over. Then we went back to our various “circles” of society, such as our respective modicums of money, blood, or culture, had made

them, and Celia Thaxter went her way, and "milked the little dun-cow" as of old, in the matchless summer-mornings, and gathered unto her heart the peace of morning and evening, and the strength of noon, and the grandeur of the sea and the sky, and the tenderness of sympathy with all living things, and reverent faith in the All-Father; and ever, as she says, she "longed to speak these things that made life so sweet,—to speak the wind, the cloud, the bird's flight, the sea's murmur, . . . until it was impossible to be silent any longer, and I was fain to mingle my voice with their myriad voices, only aspiring to be in accord with the infinite harmony, however feeble and broken my notes might be."

This afternoon, just as we took our leave of Appledore, I paid a visit to the cottage of Celia Thaxter again. The door of the parlor stood ajar, and a gentleman sitting there invited me to enter and wait for Mrs. Thaxter's return from a walk. The room, though plain and simple as to the furniture proper, was a very bower of beauty and delight with its store of treasures and gems of art and nature. I cannot tell what it was that gave such an air of warmth and luxuriousness to the rustic, even perhaps awkwardly-constructed furniture, unless it was the extraordinary beauty and richness of the colors of the flowers which were lavished everywhere. The peculiar quality and mysterious virtue of the Shoals soil to produce rare brilliancy of hue in flowers, Mrs. Thaxter mentions in her sketches. One shell I remember particularly, hanging over the center-table of books, and filled with nasturtiums, pansies, and some blue flowers,—all very common flowers, quite old-fashioned and out of date in greenhouses and gardens of good society, but dearly loved by the poet-woman of Appledore. I noticed also a painting of violets

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under the mantel, and vines hanging over it; a writing desk in the corner, also with flowers on it; and a head or bust, life-size, garlanded with a running vine,—a morning glory, I think. While I was looking to get something definite out of the general impression, the mistress of the house,—the *genius loci*—came in, a bright, breezy, cordial, self-sustained woman, of apparently thirty-five years or thereabouts, with a dash of brusqueness in her manner, or at least a refreshing absence of the lackadaisical or sentimental. “Let me pick you some pansies,” were the quick, impulsive words of genuine hospitality as I hastened to apologize for and make brief my un-introduced call. As I watched her lithe and graceful form bending over the bed of blooms, I thought of the “rough girl,” and the eccentric Harvard student, and my aristocratic acquaintance of the years gone. I do not know her history, but it is to be presumed she has heard of Celia Thaxter, and would be proud to receive her into the “first circles” of Beacon Street.

MY LIGHTHOUSE

(Prepared for the *Christian Science Monitor*)

CELIA LAIGHTON THAXTER was the daughter of a New England public man who, wearying of political life, retired to the Isles of Shoals, off the short coast of New Hampshire, where he lived as keeper of the light on White Island. Here the young girl learned to know the ocean, the sea-birds, winds and tides, and the light, on whose faithful tending so much depended.

She won a large circle of friends by the poems that reflect her life there. Famous writers and artists loved to visit her on the rocky Appledore that was her home after her marriage to Mr. Thaxter. Her garden here was so beautiful that artists often came to paint it.

The poem used here as a hymn was named "My Lighthouse," and was printed with several others in 1890 as a Christmas card or booklet by Prang, with illustrations painted by Mrs. Thaxter, one of them the lighthouse which had long lighted the shore of New Hampshire.

The card was found in a neglected book in a Cambridge home, and was offered at once to the *Hymnal*. The poem is not included in any of Mrs. Thaxter's collected works, and special permission to use it as a hymn was given by her son, Professor Thaxter, formerly of Harvard University. The words have a fine vigor and sweep and their use here perpetuates a noble parable from the human life of our time.

The music is by Sir Robert P. Stewart of Dublin, who was an organist of wide repute, a professor in Dublin University, and incidentally an authority on bagpipes. The name of the tune is, of course, derived from the word Eucharist.

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MY LIGHTHOUSE

Lift up thy light, O soul, arise and shine
Steadfast while all the storms of life assail!
Immortal spark of the great Light divine
Against whose power no tempest shall prevail!

Hold high thy lamps above earth's restless tides,
Scatter thy messages of hope afar!
Falsehood and folly pass, but truth abides;
Thine be the splendor of her deathless star.

When the world's sins and sorrows round thee rave,
Pierce thou the darkness with thy dauntless ray.
Send out thy happy beams to help and save,
"More and more shining to the perfect day!"

CELIA THAXTER

JUDGE JUSTIN H. SHAW

CELIA THAXTER, 1835-1935

Judge Justin H. Shaw associates the Beloved Poet with her Times and Work.

The memory of Celia Thaxter in Portsmouth and Kittery is especially sincere and deep and abiding. She is one of the most beloved of our American poets. Her beautiful spirit has become inseparable from everything that is good in the history of, and the sentiments of, and in our own thoughts of matters of the Isles of Shoals, where she sleeps, on Kittery territory.

THE SHOALS AT HER CHILDHOOD

Since her day, one may not mention a single matter relating to the island unless it be associated in some way with the thought of Celia Thaxter. In what she lived and in what she wrote she is imperishable. It was a fortunate day for the world that the Honorable Thomas B. Laighton, disgusted with New Hampshire politics and politicians, settled at White Island lighthouse with his family, never to return to residence on the mainland.

This was in October, 1839, when Celia Thaxter, then Celia Laighton, was a little girl of four years, and her brother, Oscar, a baby of about three months.

We may, with considerable interest, I think, associate Celia Thaxter with the world into which she was born in 1835, by reference to the events which were considered of sufficient importance for mention as to that year in the chronological annals.

1835 AN INTERESTING YEAR

Andrew Jackson was president of the United States, and William Badger was governor of New Hampshire, the

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state in which she was born. On New Year's day of that year, the Anti-slavery Society was organized in Boston, and the national debt on that date was \$37,513, the lowest point to which it was ever reduced. Richard Lawrence attempted to assassinate President Jackson on the thirtieth of that month. On December 16th and 17th occurred the great fire in New York City, and that month Major Date and one hundred sixteen men were massacred by the Seminoles. In that year Samuel Colt patented revolving firearms.

P. T. Barnum started that year to tour the country with his famous circus, and the city of Philadelphia was lighted with gas for the first time of such use.

Three men, who became the most prominent men of their period in America, in literature and religion, were born the same year, Mark Twain, Bishop Phillips Brooks and Lyman Abbott. Charles Francis Adams, the historian, of a famous family of that name, was born that year. Elisha Gray, electrician and inventor, Hetty Green, American capitalist, John La Farge, painter, sculptor and decorator, Bishop Henry Codman Potter, are familiar names of persons who were born in 1835.

HER BIRTH IN PORTSMOUTH

Celia Thaxter was born June 29, 1835, in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in the wooden house now numbered 48 Daniels Street, on the northerly side of the street, and occupied as a store by Moses Nannis, under the trade name of "The Canteen." She died at her cottage on Appledore Island, August 26, 1894. Her mother's maiden name was Eliza Rymes.

The building in which she was born is a three-storey

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structure, with two floors above devoted to a warehouse and storage. Its present appearance has little to indicate that it was ever occupied as a dwelling house. Celia Thaxter was the first of three children, then Oscar and Cedric, the youngest. An older sister died in babyhood.

HER FATHER A REMARKABLE MAN

Hon. Thomas B. Laighton, the father, was born at Portsmouth, in 1804, of a family of sea-faring men, one of whom, Mark Laighton, has been mentioned by Richard Dana in one of the stories of the sea by that distinguished author of *Three Years Before the Mast*.

Mr. Laighton, who has been commonly reported to have retired "disgruntled" to the Isles of Shoals in 1839, when his daughter was only four years old, became the keeper of White Island lighthouse, succeeding Joseph L. Locke, who was appointed to Whalesback lighthouse, and Locke, succeeding Samuel E. Haskell, resigned.

It is very probable that the use of the word "disgruntled" in connection with Mr. Laighton's selection of the Shoals is misleading. As a politician he had been successful, and was a state senator that year from Portsmouth, in the first senatorial district, and defeated by the Hon. John Page of Haverhill, for governor. He had also been successful as a business man and a public spirited citizen of Portsmouth. was editor of the New Hampshire Gazette, and held positions in the custom house and post-office in Portsmouth. His residence, at the time of his appointment to the Shoals, was 100 Market Street, as the houses were then numbered.

HIS MANY INTERESTS

He was one of the directors of the Portsmouth Whal-

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ing Company, incorporated in June, 1832, with a capital stock of \$100,000, and of which the Hon. Ichabod Goodwin was the president. He was one of the selecting committee of the Portsmouth Working Men's Reading Club, founded in 1834, and designed to be "a debating as well as a reading club." The membership numbered about forty in 1839, and funds were raised by assessments not to exceed five dollars a year for each member. In 1839 "the society owned a valuable library, composed of Dobson's Encyclopedia of twenty-one volumes, Harper's Family Library, and several other valuable works."

In 1839, the year of his departure to the Shoals, he was a member of the school committee of fourteen, of the District No. 1, and a member of the committee on high schools, the other two members being Samuel E. Coues and William H. Y. Hackett; and one of a committee to examine the schools and to report the books and apparatus necessary to be used.

Upon his removal to the Shoals, his house, 100 Market Street, was occupied by Joseph W. Laighton, who removed from No. 7 Green Street. Joseph W. Laighton was a grocer at No. 107 Market Street. Handicapped as he was from the time of his boyhood by an injury from an accident which required him to use a cane all his life until in later years he was obliged to use a crutch, he seems to have been a man with the energy and activity of the average two men.

THE THAXTERS IN AMERICA

The Thaxters are one of the oldest families in America. They are the descendants of Thomas Thaxter of England. who came over to Hingham, Mass., in 1638.

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and took the freeman's oath in 1642. He died February 14, 1654.

The first five graduates of Harvard College of the name of Thaxter were the descendants of Thomas Thaxter. The Thaxters were prominent in Massachusetts Revolutionary History, in the affairs of Harvard, in matters of state, and the French and Indian wars.

Levi Lincoln Thaxter was born in Watertown, Mass., February 1, 1824, the son of Hon. Levi Thaxter, and the grandson of Jonathan Thaxter, a Revolutionary patriot who served in the Artisan Corps. He was a distinguished scholar and critic. In 1851 he was married to Celia Laighton. At the time of his marriage, eight years after his graduation from Harvard, he was 27 years of age, and his bride was only sixteen. The union was a fortunate one, for not only was it happy between them, but it developed a young woman into a beautiful womanhood and into one of a charming circle of her times.

THAXTER A HEAVEN-SENT TEACHER

Oscar Laighton relates just how the lives of the Laightons were affected by the coming to the Islands of Levi Lincoln Thaxter. He says, "We were delighted one day in October when our splendid friend came to White Island. He was just out of college (that was in 1843) where he had studied law. Thaxter was a man of culture and high attainments, with a rare charm of manner. We were all fond of him, and father urged him to stay with us through the winter, which he consented to do. This was an event of far-reaching importance to my sister, brother and myself, for Mr. Thaxter became interested in

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our education. Mother was delighted that her children were having the benefit of this heaven-sent school."

THE MARRIAGE AND EARLY YEARS

The marriage of Levi Lincoln Thaxter and Celia Laighton took place in the south parlor of the Appledore Hotel, before a distinguished gathering of friends and guests of the hotel, the ceremony being performed by the Rev. John Weiss, a Unitarian progressive and biographer of Theodore Parker, the widest known of the Unitarians of his time.

For a while following their marriage, it seems that Levi Lincoln Thaxter and his bride Celia Thaxter, lived on Star Island, where Mr. Thaxter was the preacher in the stone church, and they lived in the old parsonage provided for the minister. Oscar Laighton mentions that his sister had said that the days on Star Island with her husband were the happiest of her married life.

Then the Thaxters seem to have moved to Newton, Mass., and resided there until in 1880 a farm on Cutts Island, Kittery Point, Maine, was purchased by the Thaxter family, where both Mrs. Thaxter and her husband spent parts of the year. Mrs. Thaxter spent her summers and many winters at Appledore.

CELIA THAXTER'S COLLECTED POEMS

In the collected poems of Celia Thaxter, gathered into the eighth edition in 1906, and copyrighted by her son, Professor Roland Thaxter, of Harvard, and known as the Appledore Edition, and published by Houghton, Mifflin Company of Boston, there are one hundred sixty-eight selections, and one poem by her brother, Oscar Laighton.

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Sarah Orne Jewett, who has written the preface to the edition, says, "In this new edition of the collected writings of Celia Thaxter, great care has been taken to keep to her own arrangement and to the order in which the poems were originally published. In this way they seem to make something like a journal of her daily life and thought, and to mark the constantly increasing power of observation which was so marked a trait of her character.

"In this, as her eyes grew quicker to see the blooming of flowers, and the flight of birds, the turn of the waves as they broke on the rocks of Appledore, so the eyes of her spirit read more and more clearly the inward significance of things, the mysterious sorrows and joys of human life. In the earliest of her poems there is much to be found of that strange insight and anticipation of experience which comes with such gifts of nature and gifts for writing as hers, but as life went on, it seemed as if sorrow were visible to her eyes, a shrouded figure walking in the daylight. 'Here I in sorrow sit' was often true to the sad vision of her imagination, yet she oftenest came hand in hand with some invisible dancing joy to a friend's door."

SARAH ORNE JEWETT'S ESTIMATE

Miss Jewett's estimate of the poet's work and spirit in this respect is so intimate and so just that one cannot hope to improve upon her words, and so they become quotable and appropriate and timely in our own consideration of her verses.

In reading the poems and the life of Celia Thaxter, one is almost involuntarily impressed with the similarity of the life and spirit of Lucy Larcom, another genuine poet of the time of Celia Thaxter. Miss Larcom was there

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with Mrs. Thaxter for three days in July, 1867, and as I have said before in the anniversary article and tribute to Lucy Larcom in the *Boston Transcript* of March 8, 1924, "One cannot read or write very much of either of them without involving in some happy way a mention of the other."

Oscar Laighton, in his book of *Ninety Years at the Isles of Shoals*, recalls that Appledore Island was next to Concord in Massachusetts, as a gathering place of distinguished people.

CELIA THAXTER'S "AMERICAN SALON"

Mr. Laighton says: "Among those whom it was our great privilege to meet, I recall Hawthorne, Lowell, Whittier, Aldrich, Stedman, Fields, Trowbridge, Beecher, Albee, R. B. Forbes, James Whitcomb Riley, and Dr. Lowell Mason (who wrote the hymns) came often with his wife and splendid sons, William, Henry and Lowell. I also recall Frances H. Burnett (who named her Little Lord Fauntleroy for my brother Cedric), Elizabeth Whittier, Sarah Orne Jewett, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Lucy Larcom, Harriet Prescott Spofford, Annie Fields, Rose Lamb and Louise C. Moulton. Among the famous painters who came to Appledore were William Morris Hunt, DeHass, Ross Turner, Childe Hassam, J. Appleton Browne, Olaf Brauner, Gaugangigl, Warren Sheppard, and many others, all remarkable for their special gifts. DeHass was famous for pictures of a breaking wave; Ross Turner for his charming sketches of our boats; Childe Hassam for magnificent pictures of the gorges and rocks at Appledore; Appleton Browne for exquisite pictures of moonlight on the water. William Morris Hunt was found drowned at

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Appledore Island. Olaf Brauner is still doing splendid work at the islands."

In a letter to Whittier, in February, 1868, Celia Thaxter says: "I had a dear, long, lovely letter from Lucy Larcom. I do think she is a heavenly body, a true woman."

One of my helpful friends who read this manuscript before it was to be re-written for reading, suggests that Celia Thaxter's island home was an American salon, in representation of the leading personalities and spirit of her time in America.

The life of Celia Thaxter is shown in her poems, her collected letters and in her descriptive books, as one might expect. They will enrich the world forever. It will not be the purpose of this sketch to take up the matter of comparative literature and criticism.

HER FIRST BOOK OF POEMS

Her first book of poems was published in 1872, with the later enlarged edition that I have mentioned. The poems were followed by *Among the Isles of Shoals*, prose, in 1873; *Driftwood*, 1878; *Poems for Children*, 1883; *The Cruise of the Mystery, and Other Poems*, 1886; and *An Island Garden*, prose, in 1894, the year of her death. *The Letters of Celia Thaxter* were collected and published the following year.

She had considerable skill as a painter in water colors, and was accustomed to illustrate separate copies of her books with flower and marine pieces for those who wished them.

Of her funeral, Oscar Laighton says: "It was in August, when her garden was a perfect cyclone of blossoms. Every kind of beautiful flower was buried with her.

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and in the parlor William Mason was playing Beethoven's music that she loved so well. Annie Fields, Rose Lamb, Lucy Derby and all my sister's children were there. As I saw Celia lying there, the thought came to me that surely anyone so gifted and beloved could not be lost forever. Dr. William Warren, Childe Hassam, J. Appleton Browne, Cedric and I carried her to the quiet grave with father and mother on Appledore."

Celia Thaxter's cottage was destroyed by the great fire on Appledore in September, 1914, when the Appledore Hotel and seven of the cottages were wiped out, and so much of the visible work of the Laughtons was obliterated in a few hours.

MR. THAXTER'S LITERARY INFLUENCE

Not much has ever been said generally about the influence of Mr. Thaxter in the poetical development of Celia Thaxter. But I think we are also indebted to him for her inspiration to write; and we know particularly that she had his assistance and his criticism upon her first poem, *Landlocked*.

"My mother," Mr. John Thaxter has said, "in handing the poem to my father for his criticism, had little expectation of its meeting with his approval, but he at once recognized its merit, and placed it in the hands of his friend and relative, James Russell Lowell, then editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, who published it in the next number of the magazine without waiting to communicate with my mother."

"Many were the discussions my parents had together in the early days of my mother's literary life, concerning her poems, and it was to my father's advice and suggestion at that time, I think, that she owed much of her beauty and finish of diction!"

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THE THAXTERS AND BROWNING

In *A Guide-Book to the Poetic and Dramatic Works of Robert Browning* by George Willis Cooke, page 195, he mentions that Celia Thaxter has written of her husband's admiration for Browning's poetry: "Mr. Thaxter's admiration of Browning's genius developed in early youth, and he was already a devoted student of his poetry long before Browning's name had become familiar in this country. His enthusiasm was something beautiful, and it grew and strengthened with every year of his life. To his clear mind the poet's meaning was always perfectly intelligible, and he had the power of making others understand without an effort the subtleties of the master's most mystic utterances."

Mr. Thaxter gave readings from Browning in Boston which were regarded as quite remarkable in the way of a clear interpretation. A boulder on the Maine seacoast marks his grave, and for this monument Browning wrote the following lines:

"Levi Lincoln Thaxter, Born in Watertown. Massachusetts, February 1, 1824. Died May 31, 1884."

Thou, whom these eyes saw never!

Say friends true

Who say my soul, helped onward by my song.

Though all unwittingly, has helped thee too?

I gave of but the little that I knew:

How were the gift requited, while along

Life's path I pace, couldst thou

make weakness strong!

Help me with knowledge—for Life's

Old—Death's New!

R. B. to L. L. T., April. 1885.

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This poem was first printed in *Poet-Lore* for August, 1889, an accurate copy being furnished for publication by Mrs. Thaxter.

THE "BROWNING STONE"

This boulder on the Maine seacoast referred to is within the old cemetery opposite the Congregational Church at Kittery Point, close to the stone wall on the left of the road as one thereabouts turns to the right to go to the Gerrish mansion. It is an irregular shaped stone not much more than three feet above the ground. One cannot read the inscription readily, and it would be quite impossible to make out all the words if one had never seen them in print. Close by is the grave of Charles Eliot Thaxter, a grandson, the son of Prof. Roland Thaxter of Harvard. There is a beautiful reference to this young man as a child, in the *Letters of Celia Thaxter*, on page 206. The three sons of Levi and Celia, Karl, John and Roland, are buried near their father.

THE SELECTION OF THE STONE

Of the selection of this stone for a monument, John Thaxter told me: "I don't remember exactly the year the stone was set up, but I think it was in 1886. There is nothing especial to state about its selection. It is a beach boulder and came from the shore near Brave Boat Harbor. We had it because my father disliked the conventional modern cut stones in common use for gravestones. The lettering was done by Mr. Hobbs of South Berwick. Time has changed all the letters to the same shade as the rest of the stone, so that unless the stone be wet or the light just right, they are very hard to decipher. In the morning, however, before the sun gets high, they show plainly. The

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best statement of the facts as to how Browning came to write the epitaph will be found in the last published volume of Browning."

The significance of this stone is that it makes Robert Browning, who was a very great man and a beloved English poet, more of a living reality forever here in Kittery and America. Here in this little cemetery, in a quiet town, we have this distinction—that we have been so happily honored, first with the grave of one who in his life was a student and a follower of the poetic master, and an example of Browning's thoughts, to one who professed to have understood those thoughts, the understanding coming as it must come in all such cases, from a sympathetic reading, from contemplation, from a love of those ideas and the ideals of the soul of Robert Browning.

A UNIQUE MEMORIAL

We do not know now of any other epitaph written specially by Robert Browning. Anything just like this therefore does not exist anywhere else in the world. And to this honor in itself, we have the added words of the poet in that subtle form of expression so full of the personality of the writer as to be typical of his attitude and representative of his thoughts.

And the stone is quite as characteristic of Levi Lincoln Thaxter as the epitaph is characteristic of Robert Browning.

Mr. Thaxter needs no greater tribute than to be remembered as one who had an early insight into the lofty meaning of the English master, for it is now regarded perhaps that Browning has best interpreted himself in his generous reference to Shelley, which is taken to have been an expression of his own spiritual aim in poetry: "I prefer to look for the highest, not simply the high," he said.

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MR. THAXTER AND HIS WIFE

While Mr. Thaxter was quite a little older than his wife, as I have shown, the disparity in no way interfered with their happiness. He evidently readily recognized the talents of his young bride from her childhood, and she appears to have profited constantly from her association with him. Her whole life work, so far as one may now see into it, was based on his help, at least in construction and in expression. We probably owe a very great debt to him for many of her inspirations. And probably also we are indebted to him for the broad spirit that is shown in all of Mrs. Thaxter's verses and in her letters. In 1880 he purchased the Cutts farm on what has long been known as Cutts Island, and here he spent his summers until his death in 1884.

CELIA THAXTER'S GRAVE ON APPLEDORE

How fitting thou shouldst hold her island grave
In thy embrace, O wonderful white sea,
And that the solemn tones of wave and wave,
Holding mysterious converse, e'er should be
The voices 'round her, since she loved them best;
That, like a waveless sea, the boundless sky
Should bend and beat above her, like a breast
With infinite star-pulses throbbing by;
That she should be in state forever there
In God's cathedral where day and night
His tapers burn with unextinguished light,
And silence fills the mighty dome like prayer,
Above the music of his organ seas
By some great angel swept through mystic keys!
O Silence, what a trumpet tongue thou hast!
O Death! how thou dost live! Her grave is there
But lo, her spirit that men say has passed
From earth to heaven, abideth everywhere!
Her voice is in the murmur of the seas;
Her garments rustle with the bending flowers;
She breathes upon us in the passing breeze;
Her gentle music wings the languid hours.
Thus heart-beats vibrate on when hearts are still,
And thoughts go winging on beyond the will
That gave them life, as stars that leave God's throne
Wheel on forever through the vast unknown;
My soul, this is earth's immortality—
Sweet, wonderful! what then must heaven's be?

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IN MEMORIAM

To Celia Thaxter

Oh where dwells my Lady of long ago
Whose garden was out at sea?
Each year when the lilies and larkspur grow
She appears again to me.

We laid her to rest to the sea's dirge song
Deep down in her island tomb—
Has she slept there still with the dead so long
Bound fast in their land of gloom?

No! Her radiant spirit dwells not there,
But in sunlit realms above—
In all the gardens, and everywhere,
She abides with light and love.

MARY LIVINGSTON TARLETON

THE GARDEN'S GRIEF

A FLOWER FOR CELIA THAXTER'S GRAVE

By Eben Rexford

Celia Thaxter's garden of old-fashioned flowers at Appledore, Isles of Shoals, was for many years before her death a prominent attraction for visitors to the eastern coast. Her exquisite poem, "The Sunrise Never Failed Us Yet," has made her a household word in many homes, and will not be soon forgotten.

When I go down to Appledore
I shall climb up a stony street.
To find a hospitable door
In an old garden, quaintly sweet.
And when I cross the well-worn sill
My eyes will all at once grow wet
At thought of her who somewhere still
Sings "Sunrise never failed us yet."

Then, as with her in days of yore,
I'll walk the dear old garden through
And with the flowers she tends no more
I'll talk of her whose heart was true
In old-time beauty as to truth.
They'll tell me they cannot forget
The friend who sang in days of youth,
"The sunrise never failed us yet."

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“She loved us,” they will say to me—
 In wordless language flowers speak.
“Simple old-fashioned things are we,
 Yet pleasure brightened in her cheek
When she came down the path to say
 ‘Good morning’ to each flower she met,
In that sweet voice that sang, one day,
 ‘The sunrise never failed us yet.’

“We miss her so! A shadow fell
 Between us and the sun that day
When to the garden Azrael
 Came with the message, ‘Come away.’
We pine for what so much we miss,
 Alas for loss that love has met
In losing her whose song was this—
 ‘The sunrise never failed us yet.’

“But sometime to the garden bowers
 Be sure that she will come to say
Sweet things to all her charming flowers,—
 And that will be a happy day.
We watch for her and she will come—
 The friend we never can forget,
Who sang to souls with grief made dumb,
 ‘The sunrise never failed us yet.’ ”

M. L. B.

CELIA THAXTER

Born of the sea foam and the mist,
Her rosy feet by azure wavelets kissed,
Her heart swept pure by every wind that blew,
Her love returned by every flower that grew.

So was she as a child; as maid and wife
Her heart grew deeper with emotions rife;
Her soul was tuned to music, hearts of men
Hearing her words grew strong and young again.

Her songs were of the sea, its waves, its shore,
The lessons that she taught were love's deep lore,
And from her island home, with touch divine,
She breathed a music that endures with time.

Her spirit has not fled, it still rests where
Its guerdon falls upon her native air,
And still shall dwell forever; touch of pen
Hath claimed for her immortal diadem.

M. L. B.

CELIA THAXTER

“She sleeps! She sleeps!”
Murmureth the wind—and the garden weeps.
“No more! No more!”
Moaneth the sea around Appledore.

Her sea-girt home she made a paradise
And reigned among her flowers, a gracious queen.
Their radiant gorgeousness
Felt daily her caress,
Her loving care, her presence so serene;
And now among their blooms at rest she lies.

Fitting the time, in plenitude of power,
At close of summer, that her life should cease.
Not as a stranded wreck,
Sea-swept from deck to deck.
But fading swiftly into that great Peace,
At night and silently, like some sweet flower.

“She sleeps! She sleeps!”
Murmureth the wind—and the garden weeps.
“No more! No more!”
Moaneth the sea around Appledore.

A. W. E.

MEMORIES OF CELIA THAXTER

By John Albee

Celia Thaxter's childhood and maidenhood and large portions of her later life were spent on the Isles of Shoals. There she died, and she sleeps beside that ocean which she loved and sang so much. There her indomitable and undying spirit still abides, drawing thither as in her earthly life pilgrims devoted to the amenities and aspirations of mankind.

By her own native intelligence, with none of the common advantages of the women of these later times, she extended the bounds of her narrow environment until they embraced most of that which we think best worth doing, knowing and having in this world. She educated herself, made her own place and lived in it with increasing power and influence to the end of her life. All this she did by the inherent gifts and that genius with which she was born, which were as clearly prophesied in her earliest childhood as they were seen when in their complete fulfilment. She was one of those souls whom God sends into the world to seek the unattainable. This heavenly paradox was her perpetual guide, as it ever has been of those who have perfected their own character and influenced that of others. In her restless search she tried many forms of self-expression, none of which satisfied her. On all sides she touched the circle of human limitation, yet with her it was a constantly extending circle. Incidentally I shall allude to this later; but my chief purpose is to follow as far as I am able her spiritual development. Although it is dif-

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ficult to separate exactly one portion or element of her life from others, yet this phase of it appears to me of singular value as typical of the modern Christian world, practical and material in its tendencies and labors, spiritual and ideal in its aspirations. The difficulties and contradictions of this position have led certain free souls--free, I mean, through their early nurture or want of it, the absence of religious affiliations, or from the various circumstances of personal associations and influence--through a long course of thought, of experience, of changing doubts and beliefs, to final peace and rest.

Celia Thaxter was such a soul; and I think it not unbecoming to speak of some things in her life not so well known, but as instructive, as those of her literary and social career. A long intimacy, common pursuits and sympathies, and frequent interchange of opinions and experiences enable me to pay this tribute to her memory. When those who have been dear and helpful to us are gone, we try to recover and preserve what is of most value. In a fire sometimes we can save the more precious articles, sometimes only the worthless. It is so at death. The suddenness, the terror of it, at first make it difficult to separate and distinguish the essential and permanent from the transient and unimportant. For my part, when friends die, I can never think so much of what they have accomplished as of what they were; and it is one of the bitter ironies of life, that what one was in one's living characteristics should so often pass into oblivion, while a book or monument of some kind, which at best represents only a moment, a phase of existence, should live on. Celia Thaxter stood among the first women writers in the country, and it was through her published writings that she

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was known to her contemporaries. If now anyone wishes to know her, he will go to her books. There he will find a small part of her, and it will be an essential and veritable part, a faithful embodiment of her mind, her insights and interests, as far as it goes. Not there, however, will he find the inward struggles, which, could they be known in all their completeness, would be of more worth than many volumes. We amuse ourselves with literature and miss the lessons of lives which create it.

Celia Thaxter was born in Portsmouth, and when four years old her father, Thomas Laighton, removed his family to the Isles of Shoals, he to become the keeper of the White Island Lighthouse. Here on this bit of land, White Island, and at Appledore, Celia Thaxter spent her early years. It is doubtful if she so much as heard in those years of church, Sunday school or other religious institutions or instruction. She may have heard the bell on the little meeting house of Gosport, but it called no member of her family to prayer. Her father was a great doubter, a man who did his own thinking—strong and independent, with an iron will, a good and persevering hater of most accepted ideas. Yet withal he had a softer side: his sun sometimes broke through the storm clouds of the godless isle. He was not so despotic and rugged as he often has been painted. I remember very well my first talk with him. I approached him with trepidation, expecting some sort of rebuff. I was young and had nothing to say, but was inquisitive, and his terrors attracted me. I went to him with a curious flower in my hand, on the pretext of inquiring its name. It was a pimpernel, the national flower of the republic of Appledore, the flower to which his daughter Celia addressed her very first unanswerable ques-

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tionings. It pleased him to give its name and its habits; and, proceeding from this, he described pretty much the whole flora of the island. Having, I suppose, found me a good listener, he talked on other matters now forgotten. I received and have retained the impression that he was a man with a remarkable memory and vigorous intellectual powers but exercised in a rather narrow sphere and with an independence sometimes amounting to perverseness in all of which characteristics his daughter resembled him; but in her they were modified and refined, first, because she was a woman, and second because of her extraordinary desire and capacity for self-cultivation in whatever her enthusiastic nature was interested, and because of her greater intellectual development, which was gained by association with writers, artists and musicians.

With all that was high and fine she had a natural spiritual affinity; and this, coupled with her inherited force of character, was the secret of her powerful attraction and influence. Her strong individuality asserted itself in her earliest childhood, when she began to sow what she afterward abundantly reaped. In the absolute seclusion from the world, she sowed with nature and her own childish musings and fancies; one small blade of grass was dear to her, and a flower in the seams of the ledges gave her unspeakable joy. She once showed me where she used to find them. "Never any such pure delight since," she said. It was inevitable that later her poetry and prose should all be colored by her love for nature. She sang of flowers, she painted them, and finally the cultivation of them became her passion. Wherever she was, and at every season of the year, you would find flowers, generally cultivated by her own hand. Her love for them was no common

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admiration; it was intense and energetic, compulsive, like her interest in people. What she saw in them, why she loved them so ardently and spent so much of her time and thought on them, when one remembers the other things she could do so well, is somewhat of a mystery. I think that in her later years writing and painting palled on her. They did not absorb and gratify her as formerly, and it was a necessity of her nature to be occupied wholly with something. It may have been too that, as she grew older and the world of former interests fainter, memories and pleasures of childhood returned, and her first awakening to self-consciousness through her love for nature reasserted itself to make her declining years as bright and beautiful as her earliest had been. Some sense she had beyond most of the beauty of form and color, but especially color: a wonder and a reverence for the life in the tiniest seed; some pride and delight in being the instrument of its reproduction. This perhaps created for her what she saw and felt in nature, and by a simple path led to the sources of all beauty. The child who before she was eleven could watch in the night to signal her father's boat with a lantern and say, "I felt so much a part of the Lord's universe.—I was no more afraid of the dark than the winds and waves"; who could at the same period of life creep out of her bed before the house was astir to see from the lighthouse cliff the sun rise and be "filled with an absorbing, unreasoning joy such as makes the song sparrow sing"; to whom in those days "a handful of grass was more precious than miles of green fields": and who even then "longed to speak the things that made life sweet." was certainly beginning to see God's hand in herself and the world about her.

But there came a time when the light which shone

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upon her in childhood and girlhood, and to which she was always obedient, began to be dimmed. The light was still there, no doubt, as in the lighthouse tower when the fog surrounds it, which for a while it cannot penetrate; ineffectual bells and horns try to take its place. In a word, the world with its demands and allurements broke in upon the young maiden, the inexperienced, but inspired, unworldly, enthusiastic, handsome island wonder of sixteen. An early and romantic marriage, the sudden burdens of married life, the extreme discipline of a new society, new manners and ideas, more work and care than one so young was fitted to endure, wrought a change in her character and darkened the radiance of her springtime. The wilding flower transplanted lost something of that glowing color and long continuing dew of its island home. Yet there was never any time or situation in which she did not devote herself to the comfort and happiness of others. This constituted her lifelong effort among those with whom her domestic and social life was cast. She could forget herself and all she might prefer to do, to cook you a dinner, to make a shirt or a shroud, or to write a comforting letter to some friend in affliction. She took no time for herself that could or ought to be given to others. In order that her literary work might not encroach upon her duties, she usually did her writing in the early morning, from four o'clock to seven, while others slept. She seemed never to be idle; she put aside or completed one work only to take up another. She always had something to do, yet time for a friend, for all who needed her. Meanwhile she thought her own thoughts and maintained her own private vocations, through which, with her interest in the intel-

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lectual struggles going on in the world. she accomplished her own illumination and power.

Many joys, sorrows and beliefs did Celia Thaxter pass through and out of before she was fifty years old. She became the companion of authors and artists; her life was always full to the brim. A full tide, the spring at its height, the sun at noon, everything in its largest scope and power, these seem to me the symbols of her activities. Her life impresses me as something massive, comprehensive and consistent with itself, from its beginning on a lone rock in the sea to the salon where she drew the wisdom, the wit and beauty of this and other lands. Here she knew how to play all the parts belonging to woman. She could make the musician play his best, the poets and scholars say their best—even Mr. Whittier could be vivacious and communicative—bring forward the modest, shut the door on the vulgar, and disengage one talent from another and give to each its opportunity. If she was sometimes imposed upon, it was because of her confiding and ingenuous spirit. She had suffered as many of the stings and buffettings of fortune as others, yet she never allowed them to obtrude or crave sympathy. I never saw her otherwise than cheerful, and usually merry and gay. Sound hearts are easily amused.

There were always persons in her salon and circle who wished to know her, and who flattered themselves that they did. Men and women in the summer weather and idle days opened their hearts to her, and thereby supposed they had established an exclusive claim upon her sympathies. There were naturally, in consequence, jealousies and heartburnings; and Appledore seldom saw a season without its little tragedy, or more often, to the disinterested

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spectator, the comedy of human passions and frailties was amusingly rehearsed in the bower of the island queen before a select company of her knights and ladies-in-waiting. Handsome and accomplished maidens were happy to touch the hem of her dress—to hold her hand was heaven—and their lovers, if they would prosper, must worship the same shrine. To see Celia Thaxter so surrounded by her flowers, lovers, pictures, books, and souvenirs, to listen to the speech and music of her gifted friends, was the most picturesque and exciting spectacle afforded in this part of the country. But like all things of that nature, when it was over and you had gone away it did not seem so fine and grand. I dare say, however, that to some it remains in the memory the chief joy of their lives. I preferred Mrs. Thaxter in less pomp and circumstance, in fewer adjectives and superlatives. In her salon I heard for the first time a number of new expletives, such as had become indispensable for the heights to which admiration often arose. Admiration is the hardest of all moods with which to keep pace, and though I flattered myself that I knew the right terms for a number of ideas and impressions, in a short time I found myself out of breath and with that drawn feeling in the muscles of the face which accompanies the effectual effort to respond to the extravagant speech of another. I have heard Mrs. Thaxter often talk over, when the season was past, these assemblies of the chosen ones in her summer salon, and express her varying feelings regarding them, recalling at one time her enjoyment of them, at another the annoyances and the embarrassments in keeping in order the various characters and tempers of her coterie of geniuses and beauties. On the whole, she succeeded very well. There were no duels, no animosities that refused to heal. From

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her salon for many years radiated fine influences, ideals of conduct, of effort in the arts and in literature, whose good fruits ripened in the East and in the West.

Meanwhile in all that she herself attempted and accomplished in verse or prose, there was a steady gain in power and breadth. She was little swerved from her own base by the intellectual influences surrounding her and to which she seemed outwardly to submit herself so enthusiastically. If one has so intense an admiration for a writer as I have known her to manifest, it goes hard with him to keep himself from close or ill-concealed imitation. But when she took up her pen, she was herself. There was no reminder of anything she had read and so heartily approved. When she wrote, she was alone—alone with herself; and if there were a conscious sense and will present, they concerned themselves to keep within the limits of her own thought, experience and observation, and to express herself in her own form. Her poems are original; they are fragments of the life she lived, and touch the life of her time at several distinct points, while objectively considered their range is narrow. Her well loved islands are the frame, the color, the environment, the suggestion, the association, in most of her verses; these islands and these waters about them and the not too distant shores of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine appear in her pages whether she is writing in their actual presence or away from them. In and through them she sings her moods, her inward life—other lives too, as they had been revealed to her; and when absent from Appledore, she comforts and consoles herself with its memories and images—as in one of her poems, entitled “Landlocked.” She did not overestimate her own literary efforts. She was glad of praise,

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more through private sources than public and thankful for honest criticism and help. I know of none who gave such unlimited admiration and encouragement to other writers as she did. She may not be classed with the greatest writers; she had, however, the soul of the poet. Her associations and sympathies were not alone with the cultured and famous men and women of her time; there were other opportunities and outlets for them, equally strong and full, even more so in the maturer years of her life, with the humble and unknown. She was no sequestered writer in an attic nor in a luxurious boudoir study. She was not a white-handed lady. She toiled at every kind of labor known to working women: and on this account as well as from the natural impulses of her heart she could enter by an always open door the houses of the sick, the poor, the troubled and overburdened. She was good for love-broken hearts, of whom there was always a contingent at the Shoals in the summer season. These she did not weep with; she tried to make them brave and reasonable. But for the poor and lowly she had nothing save tender words in their distresses, and a helping hand. She was called in at birth and death, and all in any way associated or intimate with her leaned upon her in the day of trouble. Thus did this woman, who was a poet with poets, an artist with artists, and the compeer of all those who constitute the cultivated classes, seem equally at home in their surroundings or at her needle and knitting, or with spade and trowel in her island gardens, or with fishermen and their wives and children or as a nurse to the sick, or at the bedside of the lying-in or the dying. Thus did she enlarge her life, broaden and round it out, and prepare it for that spiritual light which at last rewarded her with its hope and its promise.

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She had loved nature from the beginning—not admiringly only, but ardently; not because she had been taught but through some uncommon intuitive sense she was able to feel her relationship to it; and very early, when not more than ten years old, she began to reflect and to ask deep questions of the flowers. She says in her book *Among the Isles of Shoals*, “Ever I longed to speak these things that made life so sweet, to speak the wind, the cloud, the bird’s flight, the sea’s murmur”; she emphasizes the word *speak*. She meant that she wished to interpret and communicate all the voices of nature that spoke so much, so mysteriously, to herself—to put them into form. It was not many years ere she began to do so. Although an accurate observer, and appearing to see a dozen things where the common observer saw only one, she was not a trained naturalist; and so she found her speech, her expression, in poetry. Thus was another path opened to the heavenly vision. For the writing of poetry implies an impulse toward high thoughts, and it necessarily brings with it a great deal of self-cultivation, reflection, imagination, a sympathy with the common aspirations and instincts of humanity, for all of which there is no text-book, master nor university. When the true poet attains ease in the merely structural composition of verse, he is blest with an insight and power of expression which is as much a revelation to himself as to the reader. It was thus that Celia Thaxter gained a new elevation and greatly enlarged the natural limitations of her world.

Though there were some other influences surrounding her, which were adverse to the full acceptance of spiritual views of life and death, she mingled with a group of brilliant men and women, most of whom did not believe in

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the church and its doctrines, and some of whom were avowed materialists. It was in the fulness of the Transcendental movement, which had broken with old New England traditions and beliefs, although it preached high thinking and noblest living and combined in itself most of the intellectual activities of the time. A little later the theory of evolution, the new view of the origin of man, startled the world; and its hasty and impatient disciples thought it was all over with the Creator and immortality.

I do not think Mrs. Thaxter took a very deep interest in these matters; but she was under the personal and social influence of those who did. She did not pretend to know; she professed rather not to know, and she rested in that. Her mind was intuitive rather than logical; she liked not to argue or reason, and she was perfectly honest and sometimes almost defiant in her convictions. She might be impatient of contradictions, or too little considerate of the beliefs and opinions of others; but no one ever doubted her sincerity. As far as she saw the light, she was loyal to it. She was of such a generous, exuberant nature that what she enjoyed and any new light which she came to, she wished to share with her friends. There was a time when she eagerly desired that they should share her belief in spiritualism, theosophy, and other metaphysical and psychical revelations which in recent years have proclaimed themselves as new gospels. One almost came to believe that the ardor with which she espoused novel ideas was a sign of their permanent hold upon her; but they were merely phases, steps in her progress to firmer and more positive faith. When at last her spiritual vision became clear she was calm; she was less anxious to talk about it, to excite your enthusiasm, to make a convert of you. She had the

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conviction of all great souls when they arrive at the truth, that it must prevail, that it can stand on its own feet, and that you can do any cause more good as a witness by your life than as a special pleader or a parader with drums and banners and conventions. This may condemn one to long obscurity and neglect, but has its own rewards, and in the end triumph. "To live in the presence of great truths and eternal laws, to be led by permanent ideals—that is what keeps a man patient when the world ignores him, and calm and unspoiled when the world praises him." All is flat after a campaign, a revival, a celebration—and nobody is any wiser or happier; but three hundred and sixty-five days of adherence to a principle brings serenity and contentment to the adherent and the triumph of the principle.

At her mother's death, seventeen years before her own, the first crushing blow of grief struck and hurt her beyond any before or after. At that time she wrote, "There is no comfort for us anywhere. The consolations of religion I cannot bear. I hope all things; I believe nothing." This was the turning point in her life. She began to meditate on life, on death, and what was to follow death. With her usual earnestness and honesty, she looked at them squarely and with an untrammelled mind, and did not rest until she had come to a solution that satisfied her. She found that her mother's presence was not evoked in the dim light of a spiritualistic séance. She found at last that she must go to her. It was not long before she had insights of the immortal life. It is not necessary to recount all the steps; but they can be named as, first, the awakening to its meaning by the death of her mother and the passionate desire to communicate with her, to recover her in some way; then the reading of many

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books on immortality; the reading and hearing of the more spiritual side of the teachings of theosophy and psychical science. These were the outward means and helps in her progress. Yet I cannot help thinking these were more apparent than real. It is not after all the influences we can name and classify that make us what we become. Another and subtler influence works in man's soul, not articulate, not calculable: and when he is not disobedient to its heavenly vision, it conducts along the true path to the goal of perfect light. It was decreed that Mrs. Thaxter, by her sympathy with nature, by her poetic soul, by the integrity of her intellectual perceptions, by her unworldliness and helpfulness to her kind, no matter under what influences, adverse or favorable, should find in the end the faith, the consolation and the repose of an immortal spirit. That which in her youth had led her to the sources of all beauty in her later years led her to the sources of truth. Her first instinctive response to the spirit of nature, her intense love for every manifestation of life, her first childish acceptance of her place in the universe as she waited in the darkness on the rocks, were the early tokens of what afterwards broadened and deepened into spiritual repose. Intimations that nature is all one, that each has his appointed life and place, that the soul need fear nothing, dawned upon her in youth, and life with its experiences and growth served only to strengthen and to illumine this truth. That which was first instinctive became later an abiding faith. Passing through and beyond the various phases of conflicting beliefs, as if they were so many barriers, to spiritual freedom, she came into the broad open, into a clear vision of the simple truth that she was a beloved child of her Creator.

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A LETTER

A LETTER FROM CELIA THAXTER
TO HER SON JOHN

Isles of Shoals,
March 27th, 1873.

MY DARLING BOY:

I was rejoiced to get your brief note, but “what rubbish” it is for you to say you hadn’t one minute in which to write to your only mother, in the course of a whole month! My son, allow me to mildly state that I don’t believe a word of it—tho’ you may flatter yourself that it is true. I had a letter from father this morning, but of course you did too. All seems to go well with them. They are farther south in Florida by this time.

O John, my dear, we have had the fiend’s own month of March! Such a disastrous four weeks never was known in our experience at the Shoals. The storm of last week has never been approached in violence since the great tempest that carried away Minot’s Ledge Light twenty-five years ago and more. It was indescribably furious. The poor Lone Star sank at her moorings and she is probably gone, poor, proud, old faithful craft! Night before last came another fearful tempest. Dom and I could hardly sleep for the thunder of it, it shook us so in our beds. Yesterday morning at eight o’clock, broad daylight, it being foggy and a heavy sea still running, a Hermaphrodite brig struck on the outer rocks of White Island, a breaker carried away a portion of her stern and *drowned five men* then and there. Then the breakers pitched her upon Londoners, drove her fairly over and over, smashed her

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all up, broke her in two halves, drowned three more men and there left her. The mate alone escaped of a crew of nine. He says he knows not how he came ashore, he found himself lying there on the beach, banged and pounded and bruised, the brig a mass of bristling timbers, the masts clean vanished out of sight, the sails beaten into pulp for the paper mill, his comrades all gone; poor fellow, what a fearful plight! You know there is a deserted shanty on the island; he crept to that, found a stove and fuel within and lit a fire. All this time the fog was so thick no one here knew of the disaster. At noon it lifted and from Star the people saw the smoke and went over. The great vessel was so thoroughly destroyed as not to be visible from any distance. Two leaves from her log book floated over here; they were written last summer when she was on a voyage from Annapolis, N. B., to Barbadoes. One of her great mast hoops came over too. I am afraid of the beaches! There are eight dead men floating about these melancholy rocks. Pip and Charlie went over to Londoners last night at sunset—we did not discover it till then. All Poor's gang of workmen from Star were there, and the mate of the vessel, giving instructions to save all he could, cables, anchors, iron, etc., and looking for his dead mates among the rocks and weeds. The brig was forty days out from Liverpool loaded with salt, for Boston. Of course, her cargo has helped to flavor the brine.

I wish so much to go over to Londoners and look at the wreck, but there is too much man over there. I must wait till the excitement has subsided and the rock is deserted; then the gulls and I will have it all to ourselves. I can't tell you how shocked and solemnized we were with it all, last night. It was too hideously near. Poor Dom

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was so distressed. Just think, the brig had weathered the whole storm of the fearful night, and in broad daylight, while we were peacefully eating our breakfasts, went ashore, right under the lighthouse. Talk about mountains! I tell you the mountains of water were stupendous and they roared like a million devils. Dom and I, waking and listening in the night said, "Isn't it just like some terrible spite and rage, longing to kill and destroy?" And it was. I really thought the wind would thrust us off into the middle of the moor and there would be an end of us.

I think "bless Bob" would like to hear about the wreck—you might give him my note if you like and lots of love beside.

Uncle Oscar is going ashore in the Molly when she comes in from the fishing grounds whither she has gone to draw her trawls. He takes the sails of the Pilgrim, which fills the place of the lost Lone Star, but she isn't half the craft the Star was.

Do you think I am a clairvoyant, my dear? Or are you "running away with the idea" that you have written to me? I would you had—write again dear. *do very soon*, to your loving

MOTHER

All send love. The song sparrows are singing and I am so glad, so happy to hear them! And the warm rain has washed off all, or nearly all the hideous snow. It will be summer before we know it.

